



THE LIBERTY "BOYS OF '76"

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OR, A WILD DASH TO SAVE A FRIEND

By HARRY MOORE.



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CHAPTER I.

"SLIM JIM" RANKIN.

One afternoon in early Fall of the year 1778 a party of young men were lying under the trees halfway up the hillside overlooking the Atlantic Ocean at the extreme southernmost point of the State of South Carolina.

The young men were bronzed, handsome, fine-looking fellows, and were full of life and spirits, for they were laughing and talking, and joking one another, as young fellows will. There were about one hundred of them, and while they did not wear any uniforms it was evident to the close observer that they were soldiers, and veterans at that.

They were splendidly armed, each and every man having four pistols and a knife in his belt, and near each one lay a musket, ready to be seized instantly, if the occasion demanded—though to judge by the way they were talking, laughing, and enjoying themselves they were not expecting the appearance of an enemy.

This party was made up of the youths known as "The Liberty Boys of '76," who had made such a wonderful reputation for themselves in the North. They were commanded by a handsome youth whose name was Dick Slater, and he had become famous as a scout and spy, he having done more of this sort of work than any four patriot spies.

The youths were down in the South for the purpose of rendering such assistance as was possible to General Robert Howe, at that time in command of the patriot forces in Savannah, which city was only a few miles distant from where we find the "Liberty Boys" encamped.

"It's too bad that General Howe had to give up the idea of going down to St. Augustine and attacking Prevost's force, Dick," said Bob Estabrook, who was the young commander's righthand man.

"Yes, indeed, Bob; I was in hopes that we would get to strike Prevost a blow that he would not forget in a hurry."

"So was I."

"Well, it couldn't be helped."

"No. The men were dying off with the fever at such a rate that it would have been foolishness to go on down to St. Augustine."

"You are right. We wouldn't have had much of a force left when we got there."

"No; and they would have been so weak and listless that they could not have done much after they did get there."

"You are right."

"Say, it's queer that we 'Liberty Boys' were not affected by the fever, Dick."

"Yes, it does seem sort of queer, but we are such tough young rascals that it isn't so strange, after all, when you come to think of it."

"I'm mighty glad that we are tough, old man."

"Well, so am I."

At this moment a man emerged from the edge of the timber, and approached the party of "Liberty Boys."

The man was a stranger, and was a nondescript-looking fellow. He was dressed in the style of hunters and trappers, and in his hands he carried a long, business-like rifle, such as was used by the mountaineers in the western part of the State.

"Hello, who is that?" murmured Bob.

"A stranger," said Dick.

"Yes, I have never seen him before."

"Nor have I."

The stranger advanced till he was right in the midst of the party of "Liberty Boys," and then, pausing, he dropped the butt of his gun on the ground, rested his hands on the muzzle, and gazed around him with some curiosity.

Now that he was right in their midst it was easy to get a good look at the fellow, and Dick, who eyed him keenly, was not very favorably impressed with his appearance. There was something in the man's appearance, and in the thin lips, angular features, and shifting eyes that caused the youth to distrust the stranger.

"Well, sir," said Dick quietly, "who are you?"

The man looked at Dick quickly and searchingly.

"Who'm I?" he remarked.

"That is what I asked."

"Wal, I'm nobuddy in purtickler."

"I never heard of you."

"Hey?"

"I say I have never heard of anyone by that name."

Some of the "Liberty Boys" snickered, and the stranger's face flushed slightly, and Dick noticed that a peculiar, wicked look appeared in the fellow's eyes.

"He'll do to watch," was the youth's thought.

"Oh, thet hain't my name," the man said.

"It isn't?"

"No."

"Well, what is your name, then? That is what I asked you, and supposed that was your answer to the question."

"My name's Jim Rankin."

"Jim Rankin, eh?"

"Yas, but mos' peeple calls me 'Slim Jim.'"

"That is appropriate," said Dick, which was true, the fellow being tall and slim.

"Yas," with a nod. "I'm slim ernuff, thet's er fack."

"What do you want?" asked Dick abruptly.

"Whut do I want?"

"Yes."

"W'y, I—wal, I kinder wanted—ter know who ye fellers air, an'——"

"What are you? A spy for the British?"

The fellow pretended to be surprised and hurt.

"Whut, me er spy fur the British?" he cried. "No, sirree! I hain't no spy fur nobuddy, let erlone ther British."

"What are you, then?"

"I'm er hunter an' trapper."

"There's nothing to be hunted or trapped here."

A peculiar look shone in the man's eyes for an instant, but disappeared as quickly as it had come.

"No, uv course thar hain't," he agreed. "But, ye see, I'm gittin' kinder tired uv huntin' an' trappin', an' thort ez how I mought change my bizness fur erwhile, ef so be et c'u'd be fixed thet way."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean thet I hev erbout made up my min' thet I would like ter jine er party an' do sum fightin'."

"You mean that you think of joining the army and fighting for independence?"

"Thet's et."

"Well, that is a very good idea."

"I think so, an' so I hev come ter ye."

"Oh, you have come to us with the intention of offering your services?"

"Yas. Say, ye're ther fellers whut they calls ther 'Liberty Boys,' hain't ye?"

"What makes you think so?" asked Dick. He was somewhat surprised to hear the stranger talk so confidently.

"Oh, I jest guessed et."

"And if we are?"

"Then I want'er jine ye."

"You do?"

"Yas."

"Why do you wish to join the 'Liberty Boys?'"

"Because I've heerd er lot erbout ther 'Liberty Boys,'—how they air sech wonderful fighters, an' so on, an' them's ther kind uv fellers I wants ter be with ef I'm ter fight at all."

"That speaks well for you, Mr. Rankin."

"Does et?"

"Yes. You seem to want to fight, sure enough."

"Oh, I do. I'd like er chance ter fight ther redcoats, I would, an' know thet ef I jines ther 'Liberty Boys,' I'll git ther chance, fur I've heerd er heap erbout ye fellers."

"Perhaps you have heard more than was the truth."

"No, I don't think so. Say, hain't ye ther chap whut they calls Dick Slater?"

The youth did not answer at once, but looked the matter straight in the eyes for a few moments. Then he said slowly and deliberately:

"Mr. Rankin, don't you think you are asking too many questions?"

The fellow flushed slightly, but he was plainly one of the kind who are not easily abashed, and replied:

"I dunno's I am. How's er feller ter fin' out things, ef he don't ax questions?"

"But you seem to be wanting to find out more than there is any necessity that you should know."

"I don't think so, mister; er feller natcherlly wants to know who he's workin' fur, an' ef I'm ter jine yer party I want'er know who ther boss uv et is."

"Well, there is no need for you to ask any more questions, with that for a reason."

"W'y not?"

"Because you will not join our force."

"No?"

"No."

"W'y won't I?"

"Because we don't wish to have you do so."

"Ye don't?" It was evident that Mr. Rankin was surprised.

"We do not."

"W'y don't ye?"

"For the reason that we have all the men we need."
 "I shouldn't think ye'd ever hev thet menny. I'd think
 ye'd allus be needin' men."

"You are wrong."

"Don't none uv ye fellers ever git killed?"

"Oh, yes. Occasionally we lose some men."

"Then ye git new ones ter take their places, don't ye?"

"Yes."

"Wall, then, w'y don't ye take me?"

"For the reason that we are not needing any men at pres-
 ent. We have a full company."

"Oh, ye hev?"

"Yes."

"But I sh'd think ye'd be glad ter git er good man at
 any time, even ef ye hev got er full comp'ny."

"No."

"Then ef some uv yer men gits killed, ye'll still hev er-
 ituff."

"No, that is not the way we do business. When we
 ave a full company we don't take in any more men. I'll
 yell you what you can do, however."

"Whut?"

"You can go to Savannah and join the patriot force
 there."

The man shook his head.

"I don' wanter do thet," he said.

"Why not?"

"Becos, theer wouldn' be no fun in thet. I wanter jine
 er force whut goes kitin' aroun' ther country. doin' lively
 work. I don' wanter jine er force whut is cooped up in
 er town, an' hain't doin' nothin', nor likely ter do enny-
 thin'."

"Well, you can use your own pleasure about that, of
 course. I merely suggested it, and I will say that the
 chances are good that you will have fighting enough to do
 before very long if you join the force in Savannah. The
 patriot force won't be cooped up there always."

"No, I s'pose not, but I'd rather jine er force like
 our'n."

"That is impossible, sir. We do not need any more
 men."

It was evident that the man was disappointed. There
 as an angry look on his face, also, and a wicked glitter in
 his eyes.

"I don' think ye hev very good jedgment, Dick Slater,"
 he growled.

A peculiar glint came into the keen gray eyes of Dick
 Slater.

"I have not said that I am Dick Slater," he said quietly,

but somewhat sternly; "and in the next place, it is not
 for you to criticize even if I am. If I don't wish to take
 any more men into my company it is my business, and not
 yours."

"Oh, et is?" There was almost an insolent leer on the
 fellow's face as he said this.

"Yes, it is."

"Wal, mebbey et is. I hain't sayin' et hain't, but—I'm
 willin' ter bet sumthin' thet ye'll see ther time when ye'll
 wush't ye hed took me inter yer comp'ny, instid uv re-
 foosin' ter do so."

"I suppose you mean that for a threat?" remarked Dick,
 calmly, but with a glint of fire in his eyes.

"Oh, no; I hain't er meanin' et fur er threat, ertall."

"Well, it sounded that way. But let me tell you some-
 thing, Mr. Slim Jim Rankin—if that's your name—I am
 more than half inclined to think that you are a Tory, and
 that you are a British spy."

The fellow hastened to make denial.

"Oh, no; yer mistook, young feller, ef ye think thet,"
 he said. "I'm er patriot, I am."

"Well, I don't like the way you talk, look, and act, pa-
 triot or no patriot, and I would suggest that, for your own
 good, you get away from here about as quickly as you can."

A fierce light shone in the fellow's restless eyes for an
 instant.

"Oh, ye want me ter go?" he growled.

"I suggested that it might be for your own benefit to
 go."

"Oh, all right. I'll go, an' I'm much erbliged fur ther
 suggestion—yas, I'm much erbliged."

There was evident sarcasm in this, and it was plain that
 the speaker was angry.

"Get out of here," said Dick. "I don't like your style."

"Oh, I hain't much fur style," was the reply, "but I'm
 er bad man ter fool with, I tell ye, an' I'm er fighter. I'd
 hev fought fur ye, but ye wouldn' hev et, an' now ef I sh'd
 make up my min' ter fight erg'in ye, ye won't hev enny
 cause ter complain."

"I think you never had any intention of fighting for
 us, or with us," said Dick. "It is my opinion that you
 are a spy, and that you are here in the interests of the
 British, so the best thing you can do is to get away from
 here."

"And in a hurry, too," said Bob Estabrook, who was
 angry, and eager to go for the insolent stranger and give
 him a lesson that he would not soon forget.

"All right, I'll go," said the fellow, making his way
 slowly out from among the youths.

He did not say anything until he was in among the trees, where they grew thick, and then he paused and half-turned.

"I'm going, now," he said. "But—you'll be sorry for not letting me join your company, Dick Slater."

Then he turned and plunged in among the trees and quickly disappeared from sight.

CHAPTER II.

THE BRITISH WARSHIPS.

"Say, that fellow is a scoundrel if ever there was one," said Bob Estabrook.

"That's right."

"He's a Tory."

"I didn't like his looks."

"Wanted to be a 'Liberty Boy'!—faugh!"

"I would have hated to have him a member."

"He would have been a Jonah."

Such were a few of the expressions given utterance to by the youths when the man had disappeared from sight.

"I really believe he was a spy," said Dick, "but I could not prove it, of course, so did not wish to make him a prisoner, as he would have been a bother to us, and I would not have wished to shoot or hang him without knowing positively that he was a spy."

"I think if you would hang him on the looks of that face of his, you wouldn't be making much of a mistake, Dick," declared Bob.

"That's what I think," from Mark Morrison.

"Well, I think it just as well to let him go," said Dick.

"He can't do us any damage."

Crack.

Just as Dick finished speaking there came the sharp, whip-like crack of a rifle, and the captain of the "Liberty Boys" came within an ace of ending his career then and there.

A bullet went through the youth's hat, knocking it from his head, and just grazing the scalp.

Instantly the "Liberty Boys" were on their feet, muskets in hand.

"It was that scoundrel."

"It was Slim Jim Rankin."

"He's the fellow who did it."

"He tried to kill you, Dick."

"Can't do us any damage, eh?"

Such were a few of the exclamations, and then Dick cried out:

"After him, boys. Capture the scoundrel, if you can, and we will teach him a lesson he won't soon forget."

The youths darted away in the direction from which the shot had sounded. They gave utterance to yells and shouts intended to frighten the fugitive, and no doubt they did frighten him. At any rate, he was running away from the vicinity with a speed that was wonderful, and which suggested the suspicion that fear was lending him wings.

He needed to run swiftly, too, for the youths were fast runners, and tireless, and had the fugitive been an ordinary man he would have been overtaken and captured; but he was a wiry, tough hunter, accustomed to tramping the woods from one day to another, and was as tireless as his pursuers. On this account he was enabled to make good his escape, and after they had run a mile, the youths gave up the pursuit and returned to their encampment.

"It's lucky for that scoundrel that he has a long pair of legs, and knows how to use them," said Bob grimly when they had thrown themselves down on the grass to rest.

"That's right," from Sam Sanderson. "I'll wager that he is running yet."

"It won't be good for him if he shows his face in this vicinity again while we are here."

"You are right. I would like to have hold of the rope that would lift him up in the air underneath a stout limb."

"I don't think he will venture around here again," smiled Dick.

"No, I guess not. But, say, old man, it's a wonder you are alive, do you know it?"

"Why so?"

"It's simple enough. Fellows like that scoundrel are usually dead shots, and it must have been by a mere accident that he failed to kill you."

"My hat was pulled a bit low over my forehead, and it caused him to misjudge the exact location of the top of my head."

"Well, it was a narrow escape," said Bob.

* * * * *

Meantime Slim Jim Rankin had arrived at a cabin deep in the woods bordering the Savannah River, and perhaps two miles from the encampment of the "Liberty Boys."

Seated in front of the cabin on the grass, under the shade of the trees, were nine men.

They were rough, wild-looking fellows, and the majority looked to be just what they were—ruffians and desperadoes.

For this was a band that had done a great deal of damage in the vicinity of Savannah. It was made up of Tories, and Jim Rankin was the chief of the band. They made it their business to rob patriots and plunder them at will, and had earned an unenviable reputation. It was not known, however, that Slim Jim Rankin was the chief of the band. He was a cunning rascal, and had managed to keep this fact from becoming known.

"Wal, Jim," cried one, after the greetings were over, "what luck?"

Slim Jim shook his head, and looked dissatisfied.

"No luck ertall," he grumbled.

"Whut wuz ther matter?"

"Couldn't ye find ther camp uv ther 'Liberty Boys'?" asked another.

"Oh, yas, I foun' ther camp, all right."

"Wal, whut wuz ther trubble, then?"

"They wouldn't let me jine theer band."

"They wouldn't!" in chorus.

"No."

"W'y not?"

"Ther head wun uv the band—Dick Slater—sed ez how they hed all the men they wanted."

"Hed all they wanted, hey?"

"Yes."

"Wal, thet's funny. I'd hev s'posed thet they'd be glad ter git ez menny men ez posserble."

"Thet's whut I thort, too, but he sed no; thet they hed er full comp'ny, an' didn't hev no use fur enny more men."

"Thet kinder sp'iled yer plans, hey, Jim?"

"Yas; et sp'iled 'em fur ther present at least. Uv course when he sed he didn't want enny more men I couldn't do ennythin'."

"Thet's right."

"I couldn't make 'im take me, ye know."

"Uv course not. Whut did ye do?"

"I torked ez much ez I dared, an' then ther young cuss, Dick Slater, ordered me ter git out."

"He did?" in surprise.

"Yas. He sed he thort I wuz er British spy."

"Wal, he didn't miss et very fur, did he, Jim?"

"Not very. But I didn't like the way him an' ther res' uv 'em torked, an' so I made up my min' I would git even."

"Whut did ye do?" eagerly.

"I kim erway, ez he ordered me ter do, but I stopped when I wuz jes' out uv sight uv ther camp, an' then purty soon I crept back ter whar I c'u'd git er good view, an' I drawed er bead on thet feller, Dick Slater, an' pulled trigger."

"Haw, haw, haw!" the ruffians laughed, and one added: "I guess thet settled Mr. Dick Slater, hey, Jim?"

The fellow shook his head.

"No, et didn't settle 'im."

"Whut! Ye don't mean ter say ye missed 'im?"

"I aimed too high, an' all I done wuz ter put er bullet through his hat."

"Thet wuz too bad."

"Yas, I wuz disappointed, but I didn't hev no chance ter try erg'in, I tell ye. The hull gang wuz up an' comin' in my direckshun mighty quick, an' I hed ter git out in a hurry."

"Ye didn't hev no trouble gittin' erway frum 'em, though, did ye?"

"Wal, I got erway, but I tell ye them fellers air some on ther run."

"Whut ye goin' ter do now, Jim?"

"I dunno. We mus' manage ter capter thet feller, Dick Slater, if we posserbly kin. Thet'll bring us in more muny than ter simply kill 'im—though I'd hev done thet, ef I could, ter-day, I wuz so mad at 'im."

"Wal, ye plan et out, an' we'll do whutever ye tell us, Jim."

"All right. I'll try ter think up some kind uv er skeem."

* * * * *

The "Liberty Boys" lay on the grass, and talked and joked one another as if they had not had an exciting experience and their captain had not come within an ace of losing his life by means of the bullet of a would-be assassin.

They were young, and did not take anything to heart, and then, too, they were veterans, and so accustomed to danger that they thought nothing of such incidents as the one of an hour before. They simply made a mental resolve that if they encountered Slim Jim Rankin they would put a bullet through him without hesitation or compunction or stopping to ask questions, and then dismissed the matter from their minds.

"What is your opinion regarding the patriot force holding possession of Savannah, Dick?" asked Bob, presently.

"I think it can hold possession easily enough, Bob, unless——"

"Unless what?"

"Unless the British send reinforcements down from the North, Bob."

"Do you think there is any danger of that?"

"It would not surprise me."

"What makes you think that way?"

"It is simple enough. There is nothing going on of any

great moment in the North, and Clinton could spare a goodly force from New York if he wished to do so."

"It's a long ways down here, Dick."

"Yes, but that does not make any difference. If the British thought they could capture Savannah, and strike the patriots a hard blow by so doing, they would do it."

"I hardly look for anything of the kind to occur, however, Dick," said Bob. "I think that our work will be confined to keeping watch of the bands of marauding Tories in the vicinity of Savannah."

"There is one band that I would like to get a chance at," said Dick, "and that is the band that is known as the 'Slippery Ten.'"

"Say, Dick, do you know I more than half suspect that that fellow that was here a little while ago is a member of that gang?"

The youth nodded.

"The same thought has occurred to me," he said.

"And me."

"I'll wager that he is a member of that gang."

"So will I."

"Likely he's the boss of the gang."

Such were the exclamations of the youths, and Dick nodded assent to the expressions.

"It would not surprise me if he were the chief of the band," Dick said. "But I can't understand what he hoped to gain by joining our company."

"You may be sure he had some scheme on foot," said Bob. "He impressed me as being a deep and cunning rascal."

"I judge you are right. Bob. Well, we nipped his scheme in the bud, as it were, by refusing to let him become a member of our company."

"That's right; but he came near getting more than even by the attempt on your life."

"I shall endeavor to settle with Mr. Slim Jim Rankin for that," said Dick quietly. "That was a cowardly attempt at murder, and I don't believe in letting such cold-blooded fiends run at large."

"I shall put a bullet into him on sight," declared Bob.

"Here too."

"So will I."

"If Slim Jim knows when he is well off he won't get within range of my musket or pistol."

"I'll shoot him without the least compunction."

Such were the exclamations of the "Liberty Boys," and it was plain that Slim Jim Rankin would do well to give the youths a wide berth.

Just at this moment one of the youths exclaimed, "Look

yonder," and pointed down toward the ocean, which was visible clear up to the shore, there being a sort of open space below where the youths had their encampment, and between the camp and the shore.

The youths looked in the direction indicated, and saw a fleet of half a dozen ships standing in toward the shore.

"They are British warships!" cried Bob.

"Yes," agreed Dick; "just as I expected and feared, Clinton has sent a force down from New York for the purpose of trying to capture Savannah."

CHAPTER III.

"SLIM JIM" AGAIN APPEARS.

"Do you really think that is the case, Dick?" asked Bob.

"Yes; why else would the warships be coming here?"

"They might be stopping here to get some water, or something like that."

"I don't think so. In my opinion those ships have come here from New York and have a goodly force of British on board."

"Well, if that is the case, we will be able to find out about it by simply waiting here and watching."

"Yes, and that is what we will do. Then if a British force lands we must carry the news to General Howe as quickly as possible."

"So we must."

The youths' attention became at once centered on the ships, and they watched the maneuvers of the vessels with interest.

At last the vessels worked their way into a sort of bay, and cast anchor, after which it was seen that all was bustle and confusion on board.

Men could be seen swarming the decks like bees on a hive, and a little later boats were lowered from the different ships.

Then men were seen climbing down into the boats, and when the boats were filled they were headed for the shore.

On reaching the shore the men disembarked, and the boats went back to the ships and brought more loads, and this was repeated till quite a large force of British soldiers had been landed.

Dick, watching from the hill, made as good an estimate as he could of the number of soldiers, and placed it at about three thousand five hundred.

"Jove, that is quite a force, isn't it?" said Bob.

"Yes, so it is, Bob."

"And how many men has Howe in Savannah?"

"About twelve hundred."

"The British have three men to his one, then."

"Yes, just about."

"Well, that looks as if they would be able to capture Savannah if they go to work in earnest to do it."

"It does have a little that aspect, for a fact."

"What about it, Dick?"

The youth was silent for a few moments, evidently thinking deeply.

"I'll tell you what I will do, Bob," he said, presently.

"I will send a messenger to Howe in Savannah, with the information that the British have come, and then I will go down into the British encampment and try to find out their plans."

"You'll be nabbed, Dick."

"Oh, I don't think so."

"Well, I do."

"I will fool them, Bob."

"How?"

"I will go in disguise."

"What kind of disguise?"

"Oh, I will rig up to look like a country youth of this vicinity, and will act like one, and they won't be likely to suspect me."

"I don't know about that," said Bob, dubiously. "They likely be suspicious of everybody down in this part of the country."

"Oh, I guess not. If I play my part all right they won't suspect me, for I shall pretend to be a loyalist and will offer to guide the British to Savannah."

"Well, you may be successful, but I would advise you to be very careful."

"Oh, I am always careful, Bob."

Bob looked as if he did not know whether this were the case or not. His opinion was that Dick was a bit reckless in risking himself among the British.

"What is the use of taking the risk, Dick?" he asked.

"We know the British are here, and are pretty sure that they intend to try to capture Savannah. Why not take it for granted, and go ahead as if we knew it to be the case?"

"Because I wish to be certain, and then we will know just what to do."

Bob said no more, for he knew it would be useless.

The "Liberty Boy" began donning his disguise at once. He doffed his own suit, donned a ragged and dirty suit of homespun, pulled on a pair of old shoes with holes in

them, pulled his hair down over his eyes, donned a squirrel-skin cap, and was ready.

"How do I look, fellows?" he asked.

"Oh, you look all right," was the reply.

"He looks just like the pumpkin-growers who live around here," declared Bob.

"That is what I wish to look like," said Dick, and then, giving the youths some instructions he took his departure.

He did not go straight down to the British encampment, but made a detour, and approached from the northward.

He did not hesitate when he got close to the encampment, but stalked along, looking about him in a wondering manner, as a country youth might have done, and when the sentinel hailed him he stopped and said, "Howdy, mister."

"Hello, yourself," was the reply. "Who are you?"

"Me?"

"Yes, you."

"I'm Sam Sloper."

"Sam Sloper, eh?"

"Yas."

"Where do you live?"

"'Bout two mile frum heer?"

"What are you, a soldier?" with a grin. The redcoat was trying to be humorous. He little thought that the seemingly gawky youth standing before him was in reality one of the most daring of scouts, spies, and soldiers.

"Who, me er sojer, d'ye ax?" with a grin.

"Yes; aren't you?"

"Say, do I look like er sojer?" asked Dick, straightening up and pretending to try to look soldierly and dignified.

"I should say you do," with mock seriousness. "You look very much like a soldier."

"Wal, I hain't."

The sentinel pretended to look surprised.

"You are not?" he cried.

"No, I hain't no sojer."

"Well, well. I'm surprised."

"Air ye?"

"Yes. I thought you were not only a soldier, but on officer!"

"Oh, say, did ye, really?" grinned Dick. He was enjoying the comedy as much as the redcoat was, and felt that he had the better of it. The redcoat thought he was having fun with Dick, but the youth knew he was having fun with the redcoat.

"Of course I did. Why, you have the bearing of an officer."

"Whut's thet?"

"I mean you look like an officer—act like one."

"Oh, wal, I hain't."

"If you are not a soldier, what are you?"

"I'm er farmer."

"A farmer, eh?"

"Yas."

"What do you raise—pumpkins?"

"Yas—an' turnips an' pertaters."

"Humph. What are you doing down here, Sam?"

"W'y, ye see, I wuz down this erway, er huntin' fur er bee-tree, an' I happened ter see ther big ships, an' I kim down heer ter git er closter look at 'em."

"Oh, that is it, eh?"

"Yas."

"Did you never see any such big ships before?"

"No, I never did."

"I guess they don't come this way often."

"No; an' say, mister, whut air all these heer sojers goin' ter do?"

"What are they going to do?"

"Yas."

"Well, they are going to kill all the rebels in this part of the country."

"They air?"

"Yes; kill them, or drive 'em into the ocean and drown them."

"Whut air rebels, mister?"

"Why, don't you know?"

The apparent country youth shook his head.

"No, I don' know."

"Well, I'll tell you what rebels are. They are people who are fighting against the king."

"Whut's ther king, mister?"

The sentinel stared.

"Say, you're about the greenest specimen I have ever run across," he exclaimed. "Don't you know anything about the king?"

"No, I dunno nothin' erbout enny king."

"Well, that beats me. Why, young fellow, in England there is a man who is ruler over all the people there, and here in America, too, and he is called the king."

"Is thet so?"

"Yes."

"An' he rules over you'n me, an' ever'buddy?"

"He does."

"Wal, I didn' know et."

"You didn't?"

"No. But say, mister, whut right hez he got ter rule over us?"

"He rules over us because he is the king. That gives him the right."

This was as good an answer to that very difficult question as could possibly be made, but it did not seem to satisfy the seeming country youth, who shook his head.

"I don' unnerstan' et," he said. "I don' see w'y he sh'd be ruler over me an' ther people heer. He hain't never be'er over heer, hez he?"

"No, but you are his subjects, just the same, and he has the right to rule over you."

"I dunno. An' ye say thet the people whut don' think thet he hez er right ter rule over 'em air called rebels?"

"Yes, and I believe that you show a good many of the symptoms."

"Whut air symptoms?"

"I mean that you talk and act like a rebel."

"Say, d'ye reelly think so, mister?"

"I do."

"Wal, mebbly I do. But ye see, I don' know nothin' erbout et, an' don' mean nothin'. nohow."

The sentinel laughed.

"Have you never heard your father say anything about the king and about rebels and loyalists, Tories and Whigs?"

"No. I hain't never heerd 'im say nothin' erbout none uv them kind uv people."

"Well, I guess he doesn't care much about the matter, either way," the sentinel said.

"I guess thet's et, mister."

"Haven't you ever heard anything about the war?"

The seeming country youth scratched his head.

"Yas," he said. "I've heerd dad say ez how theer wuz er war, an thet the British an' patriots wuz fightin', but thet's all I know."

"You know where Savannah is, don't you?"

"Yas."

"Ever been there?"

"I wuz theer wunst."

"You were?"

"Yas."

"How far is it from here?"

"'Bout ten miles."

"There are patriot soldiers there, aren't there?"

"I dunno, but I guess so."

"Humph. There isn't much information to be got out of you."

"I guess you are right about that," thought Dick. Alone he said:

"Say, air all them sojers goin' ter go ter Savannah an fight ther rebels thar?"

"I guess that is about what they are going to do."
 "They'll jes' erbout kill all uv 'em, won't they?"
 "I think that is just about what we will do."
 "When air ye goin' ter Savannah?"
 "We are going to start the first thing in the morning."
 The sentinel never for a moment thought that he was giving information to a hated "rebel."
 "Say, I'd like ter see ther fight."
 "You would?"
 "Yas."
 "Well, come and go down with us, then."
 "I berleeve I will. But I'll hev ter go hum an' tell dad erbout et, first."
 "Think he'll let you go?"
 "I guess so; ef he hain't willin', I'll run erway an' go, nnyhow."
 "Want to see the fight pretty bad, eh?"
 "Yas; I hain't never seen nothin' uv thet kin', an' meb-y I won't never git anuther chance."
 "That is possible."
 "Say, d'ye s'pose they'd keer ef I go down theer whur all ther sojers air?" asked Dick. "I want see 'em clost."
 "Oh, no, they won't care; go along if you like."
 So Dick stalked onward and was soon in the middle of the encampment, among the redcoats, many of whom looked at him with amusement.
 "Hello, Country," called out one.
 "How is the pumpkin crop, this season?" from another.
 "Oh, purty fair, thank ye," was the sober reply.
 Quite a good deal of fun was made of the seeming country youth, and numerous were the rude jokes made at his expense, but he paid no attention, did not seem to notice at all. He was busy looking the men over, and learning all that he could.
 Of a sudden he was given a surprise, not to say start, however. He heard a familiar voice say:
 "Thet feller is Dick Slater, ther rebel scout an' spy, an' captin uv ther 'Liberty Boys'! Ye'll make er pris'ner uv 'im, ef ye know when ye're doin' well."
 Dick whirled at sound of the voice, and saw Slim Jim Rankin standing near, pointing his finger at him, while a score of soldiers were in the act of drawing weapons, their eyes fixed on the youth with fierce and threatening gaze.

CHAPTER IV.

THE "LIBERTY BOYS" CHANGE THEIR CAMPING-PLACE.

Dick was taken by surprise, but did not allow himself to show that he was alarmed.

He simply acted like a country youth would be expected to act under such circumstances: he dropped his underjaw and stared in apparent surprise.

His mind was working rapidly, however, and it took him but a few moments to decide upon his course of action.

Having decided, he acted promptly.

He leaped forward and pointed his finger straight at Slim Jim Rankin.

"Ye air Dick Slater, yerself," the youth cried. "Ye know ye an' yer gang uv men stopped at our house las' night an' got supper, an' ye sed ez how't ye wuz Dick Slater, an' now yer tryin' ter git suspishun offen yerself by accusin me."

Then Dick dealt the astonished Tory a blow full in the face, knocking him down. "Grab 'im, sojers," the youth cried. "He's Dick Slater, an' ye'll be doin' er good thing ef ye make er pris'ner uv 'im. He tole my dad, las' night, thet he wuz Dick Slater."

The redcoats hesitated, and looked at one another inquiringly. It was evident that they harly knew what to do. Here were two men, both strangers, and each accused the other of being Dick Slater, of whom the redcoats had heard many times, and who, they knew, was a daring scout, spy, and fighter.

Slim Jim, who was tough and hardy, was struggling to his feet, uttering curses, and Dick waited till the Tory was on his feet, and then dealt him another blow. This one was on the jaw, and it rendered the Tory unconscious, he lying still where he fell.

"Now take 'im while he's insenserble," said Dick. "Don' ye berleeve whut he sed; he wuz tryin' ter git suspishun offen himself. He's Dick Slater, fur I heerd 'im tell dad so, himself."

The soldiers were deceived by Dick's coolness and splendid acting, and made up their minds that he must be telling the truth. He looked so like a green country youth that they could not believe he could be dangerous, while Slim Jim Rankin looked like a dangerous character.

So they stepped forward, and seizing the insensible man, lifted him and carried him toward a large tent near the center of the encampment.

The "Liberty Boy" realized that he was in great danger, however, and made up his mind to get away from there as quickly as possible.

He began moving slowly away, walking as unconcernedly as possible, and doing his best not to attract attention to his movements.

He was pretty successful, and had almost reached the edge of the encampment before any move was made to

restrain him. Then he heard someone yell for him to stop, and saw a dozen soldiers running toward him.

There were other redcoats close at hand, and Dick pretended that he thought there were rebels coming to attack them, and giving vent to yells of "The rebels are comin'!" he darted toward the timber, going at his best speed.

"Stop! Stop!" yelled the redcoats.

"Stop, or we'll fire!" they added.

But of course Dick did not stop. He did not wish to be captured, for he realized that the chances were good that he would be recognized by some of the officers or soldiers who had come from New York, and then he would be shot or hanged without ceremony.

So he kept right on running, being more willing to risk being shot while in the act of trying to escape, than to be shot after he was captured.

Seeing the fugitive was not going to stop, the redcoats fired a volley, and the bullets whistled and rattled all around the youth. Luckily none hit him, and Dick was in among the trees before a second volley could be fired.

He felt confident that he would be able to make his escape, now, for he knew that the redcoats were not good woodsmen, and they had been cooped up aboardship so long that they could not run any distance.

He took it easy, therefore, and made his way to the "Liberty Boys' " encampment by a roundabout way.

"I thought you were going to be careful," said Bob, with a grin.

"I was careful, Bob."

"Careful to get into trouble."

"No, I was doing my best to avoid trouble, but that fellow, Slim Jim Rankin, suddenly put in an appearance and told the redcoats I was Dick Slater, and that caused the trouble."

"It caused him about as much trouble as it did you, didn't it, Dick?" asked Sam Sanderson.

"I guess it did," with a smile. "I got back at him by accusing him of being Dick Slater, and while the redcoats were puzzling their brains over the question of which was right, I knocked Slim Jim senseless and they carried him away, a prisoner."

"We saw it all," said Mark Morrison.

"Then I began getting out of the encampment as rapidly as possible and not attract attention, and got along first rate. I was so near the edge that when they called to me to stop I felt safe in making a dash, and did so."

"And escaped by the skin of your teeth," said Bob.

"Yes, it was a pretty close call, that's a fact; I hear bullets whistle all around me."

"You were lucky to get away alive, to say nothing of not even receiving a wound."

"You are about right, Bob."

"Of course I am; and now, Dick, what are we going to do?"

"I think we had better break camp, and move a mile farther down the coast."

"Nearer to Savannah, eh?"

"Yes. And then we will be in a position to keep track of the movements of the British."

"I think that will be a wise thing to do, for if they have that fellow, Slim Jim, down there, he will tell them of our presence here, and they will probably come right up here to get a chance at us."

"Well, they won't find us."

Then Dick gave the order to break camp, and the youth went to work at once. It did not take long to get ready, and then they moved a mile farther down the coast, making their way slowly through the timber, leading their horses.

They found a nice place for a camp, the spot selected being on the top of a promontory, from which spot they could see the British camp.

"I don't think they will find us up here," said Dick, and the others acquiesced in this view.

* * * * *

Slim Jim Rankin was an angry and disgusted man when he regained consciousness and found himself a prisoner in the hands of the British.

He had tried to get Dick Slater caught in a trap, and he had the tables turned on him nicely. He had been entrapped himself.

More, he had been knocked down twice by the youth whom he had thought to deliver into the hands of the British, and had been knocked senseless.

His head ached as a result of the blows, and he felt dizzy and faint. He was a tough customer, however, and so was almost himself again, though, as we have said, his feelings were terribly lacerated.

"Why am I a pris'ner?" he asked glumly.

"The other fellow said you were Dick Slater," was the reply.

"He lied. I'm not Dick Slater. He's the other rebel caught himself."

"Well, you accused him, and he accused you, and didn't know which to believe."

"Humph!" The grunt expressed disgust.

"And when he knocked you senseless and cried out that you were Dick Slater, we thought that perhaps you were, and made a prisoner of you."

"And didn't you capture him?"

"No, he got away."

A curse escaped the Tory's lips.

"What luck the fellow has," he growled. "Didn't ye try ter capter 'im?"

"Yes, we tried."

"An' failed, hey?"

"Yes."

"Wal, ye hev let ther real Dick Slater slip through yer fingers, thet's all."

"Are you sure of it?"

"Uv course I am."

"But who are you, then, if you are not Dick Slater?"

"I am a loyalist, and my name is Jim Rankin."

"Jim Rankin, eh?"

"Yas, but mos' ever'buddy calls me 'Slim Jim.'"

"And you are a loyalist?"

"Yas, an' ye mought know I hain't Dick Slater, an' thet thet other cuss wuz him, fur I'm er man uv nearly forty years, while he's er young feller erbout twenty years old. Ef ye know ennythin' erbout Dick Slater, ye know he's er young feller."

"Yes, we know that."

There were two redcoats in the tent with Slim Jim, and they were seemingly on guard over him, though as his arms were bound, he could hardly have made his escape even if not guarded, as he would have been noticed before he could have got outside the limits of the encampment.

Just then the flap of the tent was pulled aside, and an officer entered. He was a lieutenant, and said to the two soldiers:

"Colonel Campbell wishes the prisoner brought to his tent. He will interview him."

"Is he the commander of this army?" asked Slim Jim.

"He is," was the reply.

"All right; take me to 'im, ter wunst. I wanten be set free."

"You shall be taken to him, but I am not so certain about the rest," was the dry reply.

Slim Jim was conducted to the tent occupied by Colonel Campbell, who looked the prisoner over with considerable interest.

"Who are you?" he asked presently.

"My name is Jim Rankin."

"What were you doing in our encampment when captured?"

"Nothing out of the way, sir."

"We cannot be sure of that."

"I came to do you a favor."

"To do us a favor?"

"Yas."

"In what way were you going to do us a favor?"

"I wuz goin' ter tell ye whar ye c'u'd fin' er band uv rebels whut ye c'u'd capter."

"Oh, that's what you were going to do?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you are not Dick Slater, the rebel spy?"

"No, ther other feller wuz Dick Slater."

"The one that got away?"

"I'm tellin' ye ther trooth, though. Ther young feller whut got erway wuz Dick Slater, an' et wuz his band thet I wuz goin' ter tell ye erbout."

"Oh, it was?"

"Yas."

"Is his band in this vicinity?"

"Et wuz."

"You mean that you think it isn't now?"

"Yas. I think they'll change theer campin'-place, now thet Dick Slater hez come so near ter bein' captered."

"How many men has he?"

"Erbout er hundred."

"I'll tell you what I will do, Jim Rankin. I will send a force of two hundred men to search for the 'Liberty Boys,' as they are called, and you will act as guide. If you guide my men to where the enemy is encamped I will look upon you as being loyal, and will give you your freedom."

"All right, sir. I'll do et."

The colonel turned to the lieutenant.

"Lieutenant," he said, "you and Captain Shaw may take two hundred men, and go in search of this band of 'Liberty Boys.' If you find it strike a hard blow, for they are dangerous fellows, and it will be doing the king's cause great good if they can be wiped out."

"Very well, colonel; we will attend to the matter at once," said the lieutenant.

"You accompany him," said the colonel, addressing Rankin. "Free his arms, men."

The two soldiers cut the rope binding Rankin's arms, and he left the tent in company with the lieutenant.

It did not take long to get ready for the start, and then the force left the encampment and stole away, through the timber, guided by Slim Jim.

He led the British to the point where the "Liberty Boys" had been encamped, only to find, of course, that they had gone.

"I expected that they would be gone," he said, "an' I think I kin fin' 'em without very much trubble."

"All right, find them," said Captain Shaw. "Find them and we will wipe the 'Liberty Boys' off the face of the earth."

CHAPTER V.

A NIGHT ATTACK.

Slim Jim Rankin was a good woodsman, and was pretty shrewd in his way. It was now dark, which made it impossible for him to see the trail left by the "Liberty Boys," otherwise he would have been easily able to follow and lead the way to the encampment of the youths.

Not being able to see the trail, he pondered awhile, and then said:

"I know one or two good camping-places not far from here, and I think it likely the 'Liberty Boys' have gone to one or the other of these. If ye say so we'll go furst ter one, an' then ther other, an' see ef I'm right."

"All right; lead the way," said Captain Shaw.

So they set out, and half an hour later came to one of the places Slim Jim had in mind.

The "Liberty Boys" were not there.

"Wal, they'll be at ther other place, an' I'll bet on et!" said the Tory. "Come erlong."

He headed toward the promontory, and when the party of redcoats was within a quarter of a mile of this place they were hailed by a sentinel, who cried:

"Halt! Who goes there?"

"I tole ye," said Slim Jim, triumphantly. "They're heer:"

"You are right," said the captain. "Well, we will move steadily forward to the attack," and he gave the order.

They moved forward, and as they had not answered the challenge of the sentinel, they were not surprised when there came the sharp report of a musket, and a bullet struck one of the men, giving him a serious wound.

"I guess—I'm—done for," cried the stricken man, sinking to the ground.

"Forward on the double-quick, men!" cried the captain angrily. "We'll show the scoundrels whether or not they can shoot our brave boys down with impunity. Forward!"

The sentinel who had fired the shot was Mark Morrison, and he hastened back to the encampment and told the "Liberty Boys" that the British were coming.

The youths had heard the shot, however, and were al-

ready waiting, weapons in hand, for the appearance of the enemy.

"We'll give them a reception such as they are not expecting," said Dick grimly, and he gave the youths their orders.

The horses were back at the further side of the encampment, where they would not be likely to be injured by stray bullets, and the youths were stationed behind trees, which would afford good protection.

The approaching redcoats made considerable noise, as they came crashing through the underbrush, and the youths knew just where the enemy was. This suited the "Liberty Boys" first rate, and was almost as good as a sign-board.

Louder grew the sound of the crashing underbrush, and closer and closer came the redcoats. When he thought they had approached close enough without being checked, Dick gave the signal to fire. The signal was a shrill, piercing whistle, and the instant it was heard there came a great, crashing roar as the muskets of the "Liberty Boys" spoke, awakening the echoes for miles around.

It was a volley that did a great deal of damage, too, if what followed it was any criterion, for on the night air rose shrieks, cries, groans, and curses. Pandemonium reigned.

"Fire!" cried Captain Shaw. "Fire, men, and then charge the rebel scoundrels."

Crash!—roar!

The British fired a volley, but as the "Liberty Boys" were expecting a volley, and were ensconced behind the trees, no damage was done.

"Now give it to them with the pistols, 'Liberty Boys,'" cried Dick. "Show them that 'rebels' can fight."

Crash!—roar! Crash!—roar!

The "Liberty Boys" fired two pistol-volleys, and that they created considerable havoc in the ranks of the redcoats was evident by the renewed yells, shrieks, and curses.

"Get behind trees, men," cried Captain Shaw, taught caution by the rough experience. "Get behind trees, and return fire for fire and volley for volley."

The "Liberty Boys" were reloading their weapons as rapidly as possible, and by the time they had succeeded in doing this the redcoats had found places behind the trees, where they would be protected from the enemy's bullets.

In the hope that some damage might be inflicted, Captain Shaw gave the order to fire another volley, and this was done, but no cries of pain followed the volley. In-

stead, a chorus of mocking laughter reached the ears of the British.

"Oh, we'll make you laugh on the other side of your mouths, you insolent rebels!" cried Captain Shaw, to whose ears the laughter had come gratingly.

"Oh, do you think so, my redcoated friend?" was Dick's reply in a sarcastic voice.

"I know it!" fiercely.

"Oh, you know it?"

"Yes; before another hour has passed we will have either wiped your men off the face of the earth or effected their capture."

"That is strong talk, Sir Redcoat."

"But not too strong."

"That remains to be seen."

"Bah! I know how many men you have, and know what I am talking about. You have no chance to offer successful resistance."

"We have offered fairly successful resistance, so far, have we not?"

"Yes, but you cannot keep it up."

"Oh, I think we can."

"You will find your mistake."

"Perhaps you may find that you are mistaken in your views."

"There is no danger of that. As I said, I know how many men you have, and we have a sufficient number to crush you."

"You can't go by the number of men I have, my friend."

"Why not?"

"For the reason that one of my men is the equal of from three to ten of your redcoats."

There was silence for a few moments after this. It seemed that this statement had paralyzed the British captain. Presently he found his voice, however, and said:

"Say, you have a pretty good opinion of your men, haven't you?" There was sarcasm in the tone.

"Well, yes, to tell the truth, I have," was the calm reply.

"I think you have far too good an opinion of them."

"You do?"

"Yes. There does not live an American soldier who is the equal of ten, or five, or even three British soldiers."

"Oh, yes, there are a hundred such American soldiers that I know of."

"You mean your own men?"

"Exactly."

"I can't believe that you really mean what you say."

"You cannot?"

"No. I think that your talk is mere bravado."

"That is where you are mistaken."

"You really mean it, then?"

"I do."

"On what do you base your judgment?"

"On past performances of my men when engaged in battles with the British."

"Do you mean to say that they have been so successful as to make you feel confident that each one is the equal of from three to ten British soldiers?"

"I do."

"Well, I can't believe anything of the kind. I think it is all bosh."

"You do?"

"Yes."

"Then come ahead with your force, which I judge greatly outnumbers ours, and see how quickly we will give you a good thrashing."

This was said in such a matter-of-fact, off-hand manner that the British captain was somewhat stumped.

"By Jove! they must be fighters, sure enough!" he muttered. "At any rate they seem to have plenty of confidence in themselves."

"Oh, they are fighters, shore enuff," said Slim Jim. "Tenny rate, thet's whut I've allers heerd."

"I guess you are right. Well, we must give them a thrashing to-night, if we have to send down to the encampment for two or three hundred more men."

"Thet's ther way ter tork, capt'in," said Slim Jim; "an' ef I wuz ye, I'd send fur ther men right erway, an' then go right in an' lick ther 'Liberty Boys' quick."

Captain Shaw consulted with the lieutenant a few moments, and it was decided to do this, and a messenger was despatched to the encampment with instructions to explain matters to Colonel Campbell, and ask that he send two hundred more men at once.

It was the captain's plan now to play for time. If he could keep the enemy from suspicining that he had sent for reinforcements until the reinforcements arrived, then he could make a sudden attack and overwhelm the "Liberty Boys" before they would have a chance to do much. At least, so he figured it.

The silence of the redcoats made Dick suspicious, however, and he at once began speculating as to what it meant. He finally came to the conclusion that the enemy was up to some trick, and his decision was that reinforcements had been sent for.

"How many men did you send for, Sir Redcoat?" he asked, with as much confidence in his tones as if he knew whereof he spoke.

"What do you mean?" asked the British officer, and Dick was sure he detected surprise and vexation in the tone.

"You know what I mean."

"I assure you I do not."

"Bah! You cannot deceive me."

"I don't grasp your meaning. How have I tried to deceive you?"

"You have sent to your encampment for reinforcements, and you thought to deceive me, and not let me know what you had done."

"What, I send for reinforcements?" in a scornful voice.

"I do not need reinforcements."

"Oh, you don't?" sarcastically.

"No."

"Then why don't you attack us, and have done with it?"

"Because I do not choose to do so."

"You are afraid to do so."

"Afraid?"

"Yes, afraid. I dare you to attack us."

"Bah! I am in control of my force, Sir Rebel, and will attack when I get ready."

"Which will be after the reinforcements have arrived."

"That is none of your business."

"Oh, no, I suppose not. But after boasting the way you have been doing, I should think you would not hesitate to try to make your boasts good by attacking us. You outnumber us as it is."

"I tell you I am attending to this part of the business."

"You are attending to it very poorly, then."

"That is my lookout."

"Yes, I suppose it is. But how many men did you send for, Sir Redcoat?"

"A sufficient number, so that we will be enabled to wipe you up at one swoop," was the fierce reply.

"You must have sent for the entire British force, then," was the cool reply.

"Bah! you are about the most egotistical rebel I have ever encountered."

"You will find that it is not egotism at all before you get through with this affair, Sir Redcoat."

"Bosh!"

"Say, Dick, let's charge the scoundrels and give them a blow before their reinforcements arrive," whispered Bob Estabrook.

"I have been thinking of that, Bob."

"Well, let's do it."

"I hate to do so, Bob, for the reason that we cannot hope

to charge them and escape without losing some of our boys, and I dislike the idea of doing that."

"Oh, well, we are all willing to take our chances. We know we can't live forever, anyway."

Dick thought the matter over, and made up his mind not to risk it.

"I'll tell you what we will do, Bob," he said. "We will wait till the redcoat reinforcements get here, and will give them a warm reception, and then we will retreat. I think we will be able to do them more damage, and incur less danger ourselves by doing that way."

"All right. But can we get the horses down the embankment, Dick?"

"I think so; and by the way, I will put some of the boys at work at that, now, so that when we are ready to retreat all we will have to do will be to run down the side of the embankment."

"That is a good plan," Bob acquiesced, and then Dick told four of the "Liberty Boys" what he wished done, and they stole away to do the work.

As it was an hour before the redcoat reinforcements reached the point where their comrades were awaiting them, the four youths had ample time to get all the horses onto the beach, one hundred feet below where the youths were stationed. Here they remained in charge of the horses.

While waiting for the attack, Dick gave his men full instructions regarding what they were to do, and there would be no confusion or indecision when the time came to act. It was mainly on account of Dick's thoughtfulness and foresight in this respect that the "Liberty Boys" were always enabled to give such a good account of themselves in night encounters of this kind.

At last his keen hearing enabled him to determine that the reinforcements were at hand. He heard the low buzzing of voices, and realized that instructions were being given to the soldiers.

"All right. We'll be ready to give you a lively greeting," the youth said to himself.

Presently the crackling of dried sticks under foot, and the swishing of underbrush told Dick that the enemy was coming, and when he thought the British were close enough he gave the signal to fire.

Crash!—roar! the muskets rang out, and then wild yells, shrieks, and curses went up on the air, mingled with which were groans of agony.

Then the sounds of rushing feet and crackling underbrush grew louder.

The redcoats were close at hand!

CHAPTER VI.

IN SAVANNAH.

The "Liberty Boys" did not budge from their places behind the trees, however. Dick was a good commander, and understood that the enemy would fire a volley soon, and if they should at the time be retreating, and out from behind the protection of the trees, they would be hit by some of the bullets. He had instructed the youths to hold their position behind the trees till he gave the order to retreat.

There is little doubt that the redcoats fancied the youths were retreating, for they fired a volley, evidently from their muskets.

As the "Liberty Boys" were expecting this, and were protected by the tree-trunks they were not injured to speak of, a few being slightly wounded.

Then they proceeded to execute the order Dick had given them some time before. Each youth possessed four pistols, and now they drew these weapons, two at a time, and fired four volleys in rapid succession.

The redcoats were so close that great execution was done by the youths' bullets; the British were thrown into a state of confusion, and while they were in this condition the "Liberty Boys" left their places behind the trees and retreated rapidly without being fired upon at all.

And by the time the redcoats got over their temporary demoralization, and were ready to resume the attack, the youths were down on the beach mounting their horses.

Mad with rage on account of the damage that had been inflicted upon them, the redcoats finally charged forward, intent on avenging the deaths of their comrades, but to their surprise and chagrin they found no one to revenge themselves upon.

The enemy had flown, had made its escape.

The redcoats were angry and disappointed, for they had expected to kill and capture the entire force of "Liberty Boys," and now to find that the enemy had escaped slick and clean was very annoying.

Slim Jim Rankin began looking around, and soon discovered the way the youths had gone.

"They went down ther side uv ther bluff," he said to Captain Shaw. "Mebby I kin trail 'em, ef so be's ye wantter foller 'em."

"Are they on foot?"

"No, on hossback."

"Then there would be no use trying to follow them," growled the officer. He had received a bullet in his left arm, and was feeling anything but good.

"This is the most unsatisfactory affair that I have ever had anything to do with," he said. "I don't believe we killed one of those scoundrelly rebels, while a number of our brave boys are dead and others are dying."

"Oh, them theer 'Liberty Boys' air bad men ter fight erg'inst an' thet's er fack!" declared Slim Jim.

"They are regular nighthawks," the captain growled, "and are at home in the timber and darkness. Let me get my eyes on them in daylight, and they will never get away."

Slim Jim Rankin did not say anything in reply to this, but he thought that there might be doubts regarding the matter.

The British soldiers busied themselves in attending to the wounded, and when all had been found they were carried in blankets back to the encampment. The dead soldiers were let lie where they had fallen, it being the intention of the redcoats to return and bury the dead men in the morning.

Waiting only long enough to have the wounded arm dressed, Captain Shaw made his way to the tent occupied by Colonel Campbell. The officer had remained up in order to hear how his men came out, and it did not take the captain long to tell him.

The colonel was surprised and horrified, as well as angered when told that his men had been defeated, and that quite a number had been killed and wounded, while the audacious "rebels" had made their escape without having been damaged to any great extent.

"I can hardly understand the affair," the colonel said. "As I understand it, there are only about one hundred of the 'Liberty Boys.'"

"True, colonel," said the captain, "but they are equal to five hundred ordinary rebel soldiers."

"Surely you don't think that, captain?" exclaimed the colonel, in surprise.

"Yes, I do."

"I can hardly believe such a thing possible."

"Well, I believe it. The leader of the 'Liberty Boys,' Dick Slater, told me that each of his men was equal to from three to ten British soldiers."

"The impudence of the fellow. Surely you don't credit that statement, captain?"

"No, but they have proved themselves to be anything but ordinary fighters."

"That may be true. But there are no rebel soldiers who equal to from three to ten times their own numbers."

"Well, we had nearly four men to their one, and yet we were not only defeated, but I more than half believe we were defeated by the youths without their losing a single man."

"I could not believe that possible. You fired a number of volleys, did you not?"

"Yes."

"Then you must have killed some of them."

"I don't know. That fellow, Slim Jim, who was with us, said that good woodsmen could shelter themselves behind trees in such a manner as to keep from being more than slightly wounded, and he said further that the 'Liberty Boys' were expert woodsmen."

"Well, we will soon get a chance to even up matters with them. We will take Savannah in a day or two, and of course they will be there and will have to surrender with the rest."

"I hope that such will be the case, colonel."

After some further conversation the captain withdrew, and went to his own quarters, leaving the colonel in anything but a pleasant frame of mind.

"I would not have believed that a gang of boys could have done what those young fellows have done," he said to himself.

* * * * *

The "Liberty Boys" moved leisurely through the timber, going in a southerly direction, so as to keep between the redcoats and Savannah.

"I don't think they will try to pursue us," said Dick. "I am confident that they have had all they will want for to-night."

The other youths thought the same, and as we know they were right.

They went onward a distance of but little more than a mile, and went into camp once more.

"I would be willing to wager that we will not be disturbed again to-night," said Dick.

"And so would I," declared Bob.

The other youths were all of the same opinion, but this did not prevent Dick from exercising all necessary precautions. He placed out a double line of sentinels, in order to avoid all possibility of a surprise, and then the youths lay down and went to sleep.

They were up bright and early next morning, and then Dick instructed the youths to be on their guard, and not permit themselves to be surprised or surrounded by the enemy, after which he mounted his horse and rode away in the direction of Savannah.

An hour later he arrived in the city, and as he had been

there before he rode straight to the house occupied by General Howe as headquarters.

He leaped to the ground, tied his horse, and entered the house, and was soon afterward shown to General Howe's private office.

"Well, Dick, I am glad to see you," said the officer, giving the youth his hand. "Your messenger was here last night, and brought the information that the British had landed. Now what additional information do you bring?"

"I was in the British encampment last night, sir," said Dick, "and I learned of a certainty that the British are here to capture Savannah."

The officer bowed.

"I supposed that such was their object," he said. "Well, what do you think, Dick? Can they do it?"

The youth looked grave.

"Of course, it is impossible to say, positively, but I am afraid that they will be able to accomplish their purpose. They have a force that is three times as strong as your own."

"True; but we have the advantage of position, and the protection of the swamp at the rear of the city. This will make it necessary for the enemy to approach from the front, and I believe we will be able to offer successful resistance."

"But you must take into consideration one thing, sir," said Dick, "and that is, that while the British force is made up of seasoned veterans, yours is mainly composed of militia, new men who have never smelled the smoke of battle."

"That is true, too, but they surely will fight, when they have barricades to stand behind."

"Perhaps so."

"You have your doubts, Mr. Slater?" asked the general.

"Yes. I cannot help having doubts. If half your force was made up of veterans you might make a successful resistance, but when the majority of the men are raw recruits who have never been in a battle, there is every reason to fear that they will not be able to stand up and fight, even though protected by houses, fences, and stone walls.

"What would you advise, Mr. Slater?" The general had great faith in Dick's judgment, and was willing to hear what he had to say.

The truth was, however, that there did not seem to be anything better to do than to remain in Savannah and attempt to hold the city.

"We may be able to succeed," said Dick. "It is the only thing to do, so far as I can see."

"That is the way it looks to me."

"Yes. And you can station my 'Liberty Boys' in the ex-

tre front, where we will be the first to meet the British, and we will make as desperate resistance as possible, and thus encourage the militia to stand their ground."

"Very well. That will be kind of you."

"Oh, it will be just what my 'Liberty Boys' will want to do, anyway. They are never satisfied unless they are in the thick of the fray."

"I am aware of that. Well, your presence gives me confidence, and if we do not succeed in holding the city, I think it will be owing to an accident."

"I think so, sir; or at least I hope so."

"If you don't mind, Mr. Slater, and are not in a hurry, I wish you would make the rounds of the defenses of the city, and let me know what you think of things."

"I shall be glad to oblige you, sir."

"You may be able to make some suggestions that will be of benefit."

"Perhaps so, though I doubt it."

They set out, and put in a couple of hours going around. The general took occasion to let the men know that Dick Slater and his "Liberty Boys" would assist in defending Savannah against the British.

This seemed to give the militiamen considerable pleasure, for they had heard of the wonderful reputation which the "Liberty Boys" had won for desperate fighting.

In two or three instances Dick made suggestions, which were acted upon by the general without hesitation.

"I am much obliged to you, Mr. Slater," the general said when they had returned to the headquarters. "And you think that the men are as well placed now as it is possible for them to be?"

"I do, sir," was the reply. "I don't see how they could be placed to better advantage."

"I am pleased to hear you say that. When do you think will the British make the attack?"

"I think it likely they will make the attack to-morrow, sir."

"You don't look for them to do so to-day?"

"No. They will hardly have time to get here and make the attack to-day. They will have to march a roundabout way to reach the city, and will probably camp in the vicinity to-night, and make the attack in the morning."

"Well, that will give us just that much longer to get ready for them."

"So it will."

After some further conversation Dick bade the general good-bye, and mounting his horse, rode away to rejoin the "Liberty Boys."

He was riding along through the timber, following a

winding road, and suddenly he came upon a scene which aroused his anger.

Under a large tree stood ten or a dozen men. One of the men was a prisoner, as was evidenced by his hands being tied together behind his back, and also by the fact that a rope was around his neck, and the other end, having been passed over a limb, was in the hands of the other men.

At a glance Dick recognized one as being Slim Jim Rankin, and this was enough to make him understand that the gang was made up of desperadoes.

A little ways back from the road was a log-house of goodly size, and this was evidently the home of the man who was in the hands of the gang.

Near by, wringing their hands and weeping and pleading were a woman and a girl of sixteen or seventeen years. These were undoubtedly the wife and daughter of the man.

The youth's sharp eyes took in the whole scene at a glance.

"Here is something that needs looking into," he said to himself. "Slim Jim and those scoundrels ought to be wiped off the face of the earth. I guess I will take a hand, and see if I can't put the villains to flight."

He drew a pistol in either hand, and rode forward at a gallop, crying in a loud voice:

"Come on, 'Liberty Boys'! Come on, and kill the cowardly scoundrels."

CHAPTER VII.

A BAD GANG.

Bang! Bang!

As he finished shouting out the words Dick fired two shots, and wounded two of the men, though not so severely as to make them unable to run, as was immediately evidenced, the entire crowd letting go their hold on the rope and taking to their heels.

Undoubtedly they thought the entire force of "Liberty Boys" was coming, as Dick had intended they should.

He figured that if they thought that he was alone they might stand their ground, and he could scarcely hope to make a successful fight against ten men; but if they thought all his men were close at hand they would not make a stand, but would flee, and the result had been as he had hoped and expected.

Fearing that the scoundrels might suspect the trick, and

come back, Dick hastened to leap off his horse, and with a few sweeps of his knife, cut the ropes binding the man's arms. Then he threw the noose off the man's neck, and said:

"You are free, sir."

"Thanks to your daring and bravery, sir," was the feeling reply. "I thank you, sir, and assure you that if ever I get the chance to repay you for what you have done I shall embrace it."

"Oh, may God bless and preserve you, sir!" cried the woman, advancing and shaking his hand. "I thought that those villains were going to hang you, husband."

"And they would have done so but for this young man, Martha," was the reply.

"Oh, sir, we can never thank you enough for what you have done," said the girl, shaking his hand, as her mother had done.

"I do not wish any thanks, miss," said Dick. "I am glad that I was enabled to do you a kindness, and I am glad that I was enabled to spoil the plans of the scoundrel, Slim Jim Rankin, and his men."

"Ah, you know Slim Jim, then?" the man exclaimed.

"Yes, I made his acquaintance last night."

"He is indeed a bad man, and he has a gang that has an evil reputation in these parts."

"So I should judge by what I have seen."

"Yes, they make a business of robbing and plundering, confining their work, for the most part, to people who are known to be, or at least suspected of being patriots."

"They are Tories, then?"

"Yes, and the worst kind."

"Why were they going to hang you?"

"They were trying to make me reveal the hiding-place of my money."

"So that was what they were up to?"

"Yes, in some manner they have got the idea that I have some gold hidden, and they were trying to make me tell where."

"Well, if you had held out, and refused to tell, and help had not come, I judge they would have hanged you."

"Indeed they would."

The youth glanced in the direction in which the Tories had gone.

"Don't you think they are likely to return at any moment?"

"It is likely that they will come back, I fear."

"And they will murder us all," said the woman, with a shudder and a fearful glance toward the timber in which the Tories had disappeared.

For a few moments Dick appeared to be undecided what to do, and then he said:

"I'll tell you what I will do. If you will show me where to put my horse I will stay here awhile, and help you fight the scoundrels off, in case they come back."

"Come this way, sir," said the man. "The stable is around behind the house. Martha, you and Winnie go in the house and bar all the doors excepting the back one. We will come in at that door as soon as we have put the horse in the stable."

"Very well, Abner," replied the woman, and she and the girl hastened to the house, and entered and closed the door, and barred it.

The man and Dick, the latter leading his horse, made their way to the stable, and the horse was led inside, and unbridled and unsaddled, and given some feed, after which the two made their way to the house. Just as they reached the door the band of Tories came running forth from the timber, yelling like Indians, and brandishing their pistols threateningly.

The settler and Dick leaped through the doorway, and closed and barred the door.

"We were only just in time," said Dick.

"You are right," agreed the man.

"Oh, is that the Tories yelling, Abner?" asked the woman, with pale face and anxious look.

"Yes, Martha."

"Goodness. I fear we shall all be murdered, after all."

"Have no fears, madam," said Dick. "We will be able to fight them off, I am certain."

Then he coolly proceeded to reload the two pistols he had fired off when he first appeared on the scene.

The next moment there came a loud thumping on the door.

"There they are now," gasped the woman, clasping and unclasping her hands nervously.

The girl was standing near, also, and she was pale, but was quiet.

"Open the door," came in a loud, threatening voice.

The settler looked at Dick inquiringly.

"Want me to talk to them?" the youth asked.

"If you will."

"All right. I'll talk to them." Then, raising his voice, he called out:

"Hello, you fellows. What do you want?"

"We want you to open the door."

"Oh, you do?" Dick's voice was cool and calm.

"Yas, we do."

"What for?"

"Whut fur?"

"Yes."

"W'y, we wants to get in."

"Why do you want to get in?"

"Ye'll fin' out when we git in."

"I don't think we will."

"Ye don't?"

"No."

"I guess ye will."

"No."

"W'y won't ye?"

"Because you won't get in."

"Oh, ye think we won't git in, hey?"

"That's it, exactly."

"Wal, yer badly fooled, ef ye think thet."

"I don't think so."

"I know so."

"Sorry to dispute your word, friend, but you don't know anything of the kind."

"Bah! Open ther door."

"Couldn't think of it."

"Ef ye don' open ther door we'll break it open."

"I wouldn't advise you to do that."

"W'y not?"

"Because, if you do we'll kill ten or a dozen of you."

"Say, ye tork mighty big, ye do."

"And you'll find that we are able to make our talk good."

"Bosh!"

"There is no 'bosh' about it."

"Ef ye wuz ter kill wun uv us, d'ye know whut'd happen?"

"Yes."

"Whut?"

"We'd feel that we had done such a good thing that we would go ahead and finish up the job by killing every one of you."

A hoarse growl was heard, which was evidence that the men outside did not relish the dry humor of the speaker.

"Say, ye're too smart, altogether."

"I don't think so. I'm just smart enough—smart enough for you fellows, at any rate."

"Ye may think ye air."

"I am."

"Ye'll fin' out diffrent afore very much longer."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes."

"I don't."

"Oh, shut up. Air ye goin' ter open the door er not?"

"I guess it'll be 'er not,' friend Slim Jim."

"Ye'd better."

"I guess not."

"If ye put us ter ther trubble uv havin' ter break ther door down we'll kill ever'buddy in theer."

"You'd do it anyway if you could."

"No; ef ye'll open ther door an' Ab Sloan'll tell us whur his gold is burried we'll not hurt ennybuddy."

"Mr. Sloan has no gold buried."

"Yas he hez."

"You are mistaken."

"Wal, he's got er lot uv gold; mebbey et hain't burried, but we don' keer whether et is er hain't, ef he'll show us whur et is we won't hurt enny uv ye."

"Much obliged. But we really cannot accept your proposition, friend Slim Jim."

"Then ye'll hev ter take ther consequences."

"Certainly, and so will you."

"Oh, ther consequences won't hurt us enny."

"You will find out to the contrary."

"Whut kin ye do?"

"We can kill every man in your gang."

"Bah! W'y, theer's on'y two uv ye in theer."

"True; but we have at least twenty pistols, and as we are both dead shots, we can easily kill ten men with twenty shots."

"But whut'll we be doin' all ther time?"

"Running like scared rabbits."

Another hoarse growl of rage was heard; it was evident that the members of the band known as the "Slippery Ten" did not relish the cool, almost flippant tone of the youth in the house.

"Oh, ye think we'd be runnin' like rabbits, d'ye?"

"I am sure of it."

"Wal, ye'd fin' out yer mistake mighty quick."

"I don't think so. Didn't I put the entire gang to flight a little while ago?"

"Yas, but we thort yer hull gang wuz comin'."

"That's what I intended you should think."

"But we know theer's on'y ye in theer, bersides Ab Sloan, an' we won't run frum no two men whut ever went on two legs!"

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Slim Jim."

"Whut?"

"I'll bet you anything you like that if you break down this door we two men will make you fellows run, and run like scared rabbits, too."

"Bosh; ye couldn' do et, nohow."

"All right. What will you bet?"

"I won't bet nothin'."

"You see. You are not at all certain that we can't make my words good."

"I know ye couldn' make us run."

"You don't know anything of the kind."

"Yas I do."

"You just think it. And now, to end the controversy, just go to work and break the door down, and see what happens."

"Ye'd better open et, an' save us trubble."

"Oh, say, you are simply a big blower," said Dick, in disgust. "You don't want to do anything. Your game is to frighten people, and when you run against anyone that won't scare you don't know what to do."

"Oh, ye think I'm er big blower, d'ye?" in a voice which quivered with rage.

"I am sure of it."

"Wall, I'll show ye afore I git through with ye thet ye air mistook, thet's whut I'll do."

"Well, go ahead and do it. Don't keep us waiting."

"Thet's jes' whut we're goin' ter do!"

"Well, remember, that the instant the door goes down, we will open fire on you, and I have not the least doubt of our ability to wipe out your entire gang."

Then Dick turned to the woman and girl. "You had better go in another room," he said. "There will be lively times here in a few minutes, and likely bullets will fly thick and fast."

"But you and Abner! You will be killed."

"I don't think so, Mrs. Sloan. We will have the advantage in that all that we will have to do is to fire through the doorway, while they will have to get their eyes on us, and take aim. This will handicap them to such an extent as to make us almost equal to them in strength, notwithstanding they outnumber us five to one."

"Go on in the other room, Martha and Winnie," said Mr. Sloan. "We will fight the scoundrels off, I am sure."

Then the stentorian voice of Slim Jim was heard calling out:

"Say, ye in theer, air ye goin' ter open ther door an' save us ther trubble uv breakin' et down?"

"Of course we are not," replied Dick. "I have told you that half a dozen times. Go ahead and break the door down—and then look out for yourselves."

"All right. Boys, git ther log an' bump et up erg'inst ther door so hard et'll be knocked inter kindlin' wood."

"And we will knock you and your men into kindling wood," called out Dick.

Then, as Dick and Mr. Sloan, with cocked pistols in their hands, stood awaiting the crash, there came the sound

of cheering from outside, followed by musket-shots and hoarse yells of fear, the latter coming, seemingly, from the lips of Slim Jim and his men.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ATTACK ON SAVANNAH.

"We are safe now," said Dick calmly, as he let down the hammers of his pistols and stuck the weapons in his belt.

"Safe?" asked Mr. Sloan dubiously.

"Yes, Slim Jim and his men have been routed by friends of ours."

"How do you know they are friends of ours?"

"I know their voices."

"Ah, you do?"

"Yes; the newcomers are my own men."

"Your own men?" in surprise.

"Yes; the 'Liberty Boys.'"

"The 'Liberty Boys?'"

"Yes."

"I've heard of them. Then you are——"

"Dick Slater, their commander."

"Well, well. I am glad to know who you really are, Mr. Slater."

The youth stepped to the door, opened it and passed through. Mr. Sloan and his wife and daughter followed suit, and they were just in time to see Slim Jim and his men disappearing in the timber, followed by a volley of pistol-shots from a party of young men who had been pursuing the gang.

The "Liberty Boys" seemed to realize the uselessness of pursuing the fugitives farther, and turning back, approached the little group standing by the side of the house.

The leader of the party was Bob Estabrook, and as he saw and recognized Dick an exclamation escaped him.

"Hello, you here, Dick?" he cried.

"As you see, Bob."

"How comes it you are here?"

Dick explained.

"So that's the way of it, eh?" said Bob, when Dick had finished.

"That's the way of it, Bob."

"Well, I'm glad we happened along just when we did."

"So am I. You got here at just the right time."

"So we did. They were going to break the door down, weren't they."

"Yes."

"And they were ten to your two. They would have made it hot for you."

"Well, we would have made it a bit warm for them, too. But as you say, the odds were pretty big against us."

"Yes, it was better that we came along."

"Where is the British army, Bob?"

"About two miles behind us."

"Ah! And is it coming this way?"

"Yes."

"It is on its way to Savannah, eh?"

"Yes; that is where it is headed for, without doubt."

"What British army are you speaking of, Mr. Slater?" asked Mr. Sloan.

"The one that landed from the British warships last evening."

"I had not heard of it."

"You had not?"

"No."

"Well, there is quite a large British force coming this way, at this very moment, and the intention is, without doubt, to capture Savannah."

"That is bad."

"Yes, so it is; the British are so much stronger than the patriot force in Savannah that I fear they will be able to effect the capture of the city."

"That will make it worse for us patriots," said Mrs. Sloan, "and goodness knows it was bad enough before."

"Yes, we will be ruthlessly plundered now," said Mr. Sloan.

"We will be lucky if we are not murdered," said Winnie.

"Well, we will have to hope for the best," said her mother.

"What shall we do, Dick?" asked Bob; "you are in command now."

"We will keep retreating toward Savannah, so as to be in front of the redcoats, Bob, and then we will be there when they make the attack."

"I supposed that was what you would want that we should do, and that is what we have been doing—keeping in front of the British."

"That is right. General Howe expects us to occupy the most advanced position, when the British make the attack, and it is his hope that our stubborn resistance may make the militia under him stand their ground and fight."

"Well, we'll do our part," smiled Bob. "And if the

militia stand their ground and make a stubborn fight, it may be possible that we will be able to drive the British back and defeat them."

"I hope that such will prove to be the case."

Then Dick and the "Liberty Boys" bade the Sloans good-bye, and mounting their horses rode onward.

They did not go far, however. It was Dick's fear that the Tory band under Slim Jim might return, and so he ordered the youths to pause when they came to the top of a hill less than half a mile from the house. Here they dismounted, and threw themselves down to rest and await developments.

The house was plainly visible from the top of the hill, and Dick was determined that if the Tories returned he would take some of his men and dash down there and make an attempt to kill all the members of the gang. Bob said that he thought that he and his comrades had wounded two or three of the scoundrels, but did not think they had killed any of them.

A close watch was kept up, but the Tories did not return.

"I judge that they think it is too warm there for them," said Bob. "First you interfered, when they thought they had everything their own way, and then later we came along and spoiled their plans."

"They may have given it up as a bad job," agreed Dick. "They had better, for if—there they are! Mount, a score of you, and follow me."

The youth was on the back of his horse and riding down the hill like an avalanche in a jiffy, and at his heels came a score of the "Liberty Boys."

It took but a few minutes to reach the settler's house, and Slim Jim and his men, made wary by their recent experiences, saw the youths coming, and giving up their attempt to break into the house, fled at the top of their speed.

"Give them a volley, boys," cried Dick, and the youths did as ordered.

Two members of the band threw up their hands and plunged forward upon their faces, and with wild yells of rage the others plunged in among the trees and disappeared from sight.

"We got a couple of them that time," said Dick, with considerable satisfaction. "Perhaps that will teach them a lesson, and cause them to go away and stay away."

"I should think they would begin to realize that it is best for them to stay away from here," grinned Bob.

Mr. Sloan and his wife and daughter came out of the house and thanked Dick and his comrades.

"I thought that we were in for it this time, sure," the man said.

"We stopped up on top of the hill, yonder," said Dick, "and we saw the scoundrels as soon as they appeared, and mounted and came down here in a hurry."

"Well, I hope they will stay away now," said Mrs. Sloan.

"There are at least two of them that won't bother you any more," said Bob, significantly, and the woman and girl shuddered.

The "Liberty Boys" went to where the two forms lay on the ground, and found that both Tories were dead.

"Get a spade, Mr. Sloan, and we will bury them," said Dick.

The settler did so, and it did not take long to dig a hole and bury the two dead men.

"They got only what they deserved," said Dick; "they are scoundrels, if ever I saw one."

"Yes, they deserved death," agreed Mr. Sloan. "But I fear it will make Slim Jim and the rest more bitter against me."

"I hardly think so. They would have killed you anyway, and that's the worst they could do to you."

"True."

"Now we will go back to our position on the top of the hill," said Dick. "We will keep watch, and if they put in an appearance again we will be down here in a jiffy."

"I shall feel better to know you are there, Mr. Slater."

"We will remain there until the British put in an appearance, and then we will have to move along."

"I understand."

"Well, good-bye, Mr. Sloan, and Mrs. Sloan, and Miss Winnie."

The three bade Dick and his comrades good-bye, and then as the youths rode away they re-entered the house, for they feared Slim Jim and his comrades might return.

The main party of "Liberty Boys" had witnessed the affair from the hilltop, and congratulated Dick on ending the careers of two of the villains.

"That ought to put a stop to their work for awhile," said one.

"I hope that it will," said Dick.

They kept close watch, but saw nothing more of the Tory band.

"I guess they know we are here, and are afraid to put in an appearance again," said Bob.

"Likely," agreed Dick.

They kept up a watch for awhile longer, and then of a sudden one of the youths exclaimed:

"There come the redcoats!"

All looked, and saw that the youth had spoken truly. Coming down the road was the head of the long column of British. They were marching slowly, but steadily, and were almost to the home of the Sloans.

"Let's wait and see if they stop there," said Dick.

The youths were willing. They did not deem it necessary to be in any hurry to get away anyway, as they were able to go much faster than the enemy could hope to go.

The redcoats did stop at the Sloan home, and the officer in command held quite a long conversation with Mr. Sloan.

Presently the officer turned to his men, waved his sword, and the column began moving again.

"Well, they didn't stop to do any damage," said Dick.

"No, not this time," said Bob.

"You think they'll attend to that work later on, Bob?"

"I have no doubt regarding it."

"I think it likely, myself. Their first work will be to try to capture Savannah, and if they succeed in doing so they will then have time to attend to these other matters."

Then Dick gave the order to mount. The youths obeyed, and soon they were riding along the road at a gallop, headed for Savannah.

They did not keep up this pace long, but soon slackened it to a walk, for they did not wish to get too far ahead of the British.

All that day the "Liberty Boys" kept in advance of the British, and when night came and the British went into camp they were only about two miles from Savannah.

Leaving four men behind to keep watch on the enemy, Dick and the "Liberty Boys" rode onward and into Savannah.

As soon as they had gone to their quarters, Dick made his way to headquarters, to report to General Howe.

"So the enemy is close at hand, Dick?" the general remarked when the youth had made his report.

"Yes, general, the British are encamped within two miles of the city."

"Then they will make an attack in the morning."

"Quite likely."

"Well, we must be ready for them."

"We will be."

The news soon went throughout the city to the effect that the British were close at hand, and there was considerable excitement among the citizens. The majority were sorry to hear of the coming of the British, but there were many, however, who were in sympathy with the king, and were glad.

All was quiet throughout the night, but when morning came all was bustle and confusion. The soldiers were get-

ting ready for the battle which was to take place soon, and the non-combatants were looking for places of safety.

About nine o'clock one of the scouts came in and reported that the British were advancing.

"They'll be here within the hour," said Dick, and then he ordered the "Liberty Boys" to take up their position in the extreme front, where they would be first to meet the enemy.

"We will engage the enemy," said Dick to the militia, "and then you will open on them while we are reloading; in that way we will be able to keep them from advancing rapidly."

An hour later the advance guard of the British put in an appearance, and Dick and his boys got ready to receive the enemy. It did not advance at once to the attack, however, but came to a stop, and waited.

The youth could not think why the British did not advance and make an attack, but he supposed they would do so soon, and held his men in readiness to give the enemy a warm reception.

Back a ways, the youths' horses were in waiting, ready bridled and saddled, for Dick thought it might be possible that the patriots would be defeated no matter how stubbornly they fought, and in that case it was his intention to have his men mount and try to escape by making a bold dash for liberty.

One, two, three hours passed, and still the enemy had not advanced to the attack, and then of a sudden word came to Dick that the British were in the city, and were attacking the patriots from the rear.

The youth could hardly credit this at first, as the rear of the city was protected by a great swamp, but a scout who he sent to find out the truth of the matter soon returned with the information that the statement was correct, that the British were in the city.

"The militia are throwing down their weapons and surrendering right and left," he said, "and I don't think there is the least chance of their holding the city. Indeed, I don't believe they are going to make the attempt."

"Then the thing for us to do is to get away before it is too late," said Dick.

"That's the way it looks to me," said Bob.

Then Dick gave the order to move back to where the horses were, mount, and get out of the city, and the youths hastened to obey.

Dick had matured his plans. He knew it would be suicidal to try to get through the lines of the enemy in front of the city, so he led the way toward the river at the east.

The "Liberty Boys" rode into the water unhesitatingly,

and their horses were soon swimming toward the other side of the stream.

They were not discovered until they were halfway across the river, and then it was too late to stop them. By the time they reached the farther shore the desultory firing that had been going on stopped, and all was silence.

"I guess the British have triumphed," said Dick. "Savannah is in their hands."

CHAPTER IX.

A "HURRY CALL."

Dick could not understand how the British had managed to enter Savannah from the rear, but it was really a very simple matter.

That morning, just as the British were making ready to advance and attack from the front, a negro entered the encampment and asked for the commander. He was conducted to Colonel Campbell, who impatiently asked what he wanted.

"Is yo' gwyne ter 'tack de rebels in Savanny, massa?" the colored man asked.

"Yes," was the reply. "What of it?"

"Is yo' t'inkin' ob 'tackin' dem frum de frunt, heer?"

"Yes."

"Dey'll be 'spectin' yo' ter come dat erway, won't dey?"

"Yes." The officer was more patient than might have been expected, but somehow he was impressed with the idea that the negro had some valuable information to impart.

"An' uf dey is 'xpectin' yo', dey'll be so dey kin make a purty bad fight ob hit, won't dey?"

"Yes, we expect to have them make quite a stubborn fight."

"But uf yo' c'u'd take dem by s'prise, by comin' in erhind dem, an' attackin' dem when dey wuzn't 'xpecktin' hit, yo' c'u'd lick dem widout much trubble, couldn' yo'?"

Colonel Campbell started, and looked at the negro searchingly.

"Yes, indeed," he said. "But we can't attack them from the rear."

"W'y not?"

"Because there is an impenetrable swamp encircling the city at the rear, and we can't get through it."

"But uf yo' c'u'd git troo hit?" There was a cunning look on the black man's face.

"Why, if we could do that we would have the rebels at our mercy."

"Dat's whut I t'ought."

"You thought rightly."

"Wal, now, s'posin' dat er feller c'u'd show yo' er way ter git troo dat swamp, whut would yo' gib 'im ter do hit?"

"Do you know of a path through the swamp?" asked the officer, eagerly.

The colored man hesitated, and then said:

"Yas, massa, I does."

"How long would it take for a part of my force to march around and enter the city at the rear by the way of this path?"

"'Bout t'ree hours, massa."

"You are sure you know a way through the swamp?"

"I'm shuah ob hit, massa. I done be'n t'roo it lots ob times."

"Very good. Show me the way through the swamp, and I will make you a present of ten pounds, and pay it in gold."

A grin o'erspread the negro's face.

"I'll do hit, massa," he said. "When yo' is ready, I is."

Colonel Campbell quickly called his officers together and told them what he was going to do.

He took a portion of the force, and started at once, leaving the other portion behind, under his next officer in rank. He instructed this officer to keep the attention of the enemy attracted if possible.

"Make feints as if you were going to advance," he said. "Keep them thinking you are going to make an attack at almost any moment."

Then with Colonel Campbell and the negro at their head, the redcoats marched in a half circuit, and got around behind the city. Their movement was shielded from the observation of the patriots in the city by the heavy timber.

They were now in the rear of the city, but a dense and supposedly impenetrable swamp lay between; the negro plunged unhesitatingly into the swamp, however, and the soldiers followed. To their surprise they found that there was a solid path of an average width of four feet.

The path wound this way and that, however, and was so shut in by plants and reeds and underbrush that no one not familiar with the crooks and turns could have followed the path.

At last they emerged from the swamp, and found themselves in the outskirts of the city of Savannah. No "rebel" soldiers were anywhere in sight, and the British officer now realized that victory was assured, for his force out-

numbered that of the enemy greatly, and he was going to succeed in taking the enemy practically by surprise.

Soon his force came upon some of the patriot soldiers, and opened fire on them. The soldiers were militia, and after firing one volley wildly, took to their heels and ran to where the main force was located.

As soon as they had told their story General Howe knew it was all up with him. Attacked from both front and rear he would have no chance; he would be between two knives, and would be cut to pieces.

He could not imagine how the enemy had succeeded in getting around to the rear, but they were there, and that was enough to know.

When Colonel Campbell sent in a summons to surrender, General Howe did so promptly.

"It would be useless to attempt to hold out against them when they have such an advantage," he said; so he delivered up his sword to Colonel Campbell, and the patriot soldiers threw down their arms.

When the British counted their prisoners they found that they had five hundred. They thought that there should have been more than that number, but had no idea how many there really should have been. The truth was that about six hundred hid in houses in the city, and gradually, a few at a time, escaped later on. The "Liberty Boys," as we have seen, made their escape at once by swimming their horses across the river.

As soon as they reached the shore the youths rode away, heading in the direction of the promontory on the seashore, where they had been encamped the night they were attacked by the British.

When they reached this promontory they went into camp.

"Do you think we will be safe here, Dick?" asked Bob.

"As safe here as anywhere, I think, Bob, and I want to be where I can see what the redcoats do."

Along toward the middle of the afternoon they saw a horseman ride down to the shore, dismount, enter a boat, and go out to one of the ships.

Half an hour later the six vessels got up sails and sailed down the shore and came to anchor in the mouth of the Savannah River.

As soon as he noted what the British were about Dick gave the order to mount and move down the seashore, and this was done.

They went into camp once more, this time on a wooded knoll on the bank of the river, and from which place it was possible to see what was going on in the vicinity of the ships.

It was now noon, and the youths ate a frugal repast, after

which they renewed the work of keeping watch on the British.

An hour later several boats put off from each of the ships, and landed at the piers along the city's water-front. The boats were there an hour, perhaps, and then they were rowed back to the ships, and in them could be seen the patriot soldiers.

"They are taking the prisoners aboard the ships," said Dick.

"Yes, that is what they are doing," agreed Bob.

"I feared they would do so, Bob."

"What difference does it make, Dick?"

"I thought that we might succeed in rescuing some of the patriots, if they were kept on shore."

"Ah, I see."

"But now that they are on shipboard, it will be a difficult matter to do anything."

"I should say so."

The youths watched, and saw the boats make two or three trips. The last time the boats did not return, and the "Liberty Boys" decided that all the prisoners had been taken aboard the ships.

"Well, Savannah is in the hands of the enemy," said Dick, with rather a disconsolate expression on his face.

"Yes," from Bob. "It's too bad, but can't be helped."

"I wonder how the redcoats managed to get around and attack the patriots from the rear, Bob?"

"They must have succeeded in making their way through the swamp."

"I judge so; but it was thought that the swamp was impenetrable."

"They must have found a path through it."

"Likely they were guided through it by some one who knew of a path."

"That is probably the case."

"And the result was that the militia, instead of being the last to be attacked, was the first."

"That was it, exactly. Well, they would have been too strong for us, anyways, so it is perhaps as well the way it is."

Dick had scouts out in all directions, to avoid being surprised by the British, who might send out a force in search of his "Liberty Boys," and suddenly one of the scouts put in an appearance. He had been running, and was almost out of breath.

"Three redcoats are coming down along the shore with our friend, Mr. Sloan, a prisoner," he exclaimed. "If you wish to rescue him, Dick, you will have to hurry. See, yonder they come, now."

It was a "hurry call," sure enough, but the "Liberty Boys" were determined to save their friend, and made a wild dash to head the redcoats off.

The British were mounted, and were coming at a gallop, but the "Liberty Boys" dashed down the steep side of the promontory in the most reckless fashion. Had the redcoats continued at the same gait they would have been headed off easily, but they saw the youths, and releasing the horse on which the prisoner was mounted, they stuck the spurs into their animals, and urged them to their best speed, with the result that they succeeded in getting past before they could be headed off.

The youths had left their muskets in camp, but they drew their pistols and fired, in the hope that they might bring the fugitives down. They failed in this, however, as the horses had carried their riders out of harm's way.

The youths caught the horse on which Mr. Sloan was mounted, however, and quickly cut the ropes binding him, and assisted him to alight.

"What does this mean, Mr. Sloan?" asked Dick. "Why have the redcoats made this attempt to carry you off a prisoner?"

"That is more than I can tell you, Mr. Slater," was the reply.

"Did they do any damage at your place?"

"No; they came riding up, and asked me if my name was Abner Sloan. I told them it was, and then they said I would have to go with them. I protested, but it did no good, and they bound my arms, placed me on the back of a horse, and rode away without more words."

"And could you get nothing out of them relative to why they had made a prisoner of you?"

"Nothing."

"That is strange."

"So it seems to me. Well, I'm very much obliged to you young men for what you have done for me."

"You are entirely welcome, Mr. Sloan. We were glad to do what we did."

"I won't forget your action, Mr. Slater; and now I think I had better return to my home at once, for my wife and daughter are no doubt almost crazy with fear for my safety."

"Quite likely. Yes, it will be best for you to get home as soon as possible."

Mounting his horse the settler bade the youths good-bye, and rode away, while they made their way back to the encampment.

The youths saw the three redcoats ride into the river and swim their horses across to the city. A little later three

men in a boat made their way out to one of the ships, and not long after that several boats loaded with redcoats were seen pushing off from the ships, and the boats headed for the shore at the point nearest the promontory.

The "Liberty Boys" watched the boats for a few minutes, and then Bob said:

"I guess that means that they are going to try to make it warm for us, Dick."

"I guess you are right about that, Bob," was the quiet reply.

CHAPTER X.

THE LAST OF THE "SLIPPERY TEN."

"What are you going to do, Dick?"

"Well we won't stay here and wait for the enemy to surround us, that is certain."

"Say, don't retreat until after we have had a chance to strike them a blow, Dick," said Mark Morrison.

"I shall not do so. In fact, I guess we will advance and meet them more than half way."

"That's the way to talk," cried Bob. "What is your plan?"

"Well, the chances are that they will attempt to surround us, don't you think?"

"That is just about what they will try to do."

"Well, in order to do that they will enter the timber just about yonder," and Dick pointed.

"Likely you are right."

"I think so. Well, we will move down there, and when they start to enter the timber we will be there to receive them."

This proposition met with the approval of all, and they hastened to bridle and saddle their horses. This done, they mounted and rode through the timber, to the point Dick had indicated.

They led their horses back quite a ways into the timber, after dismounting, and tied them; then they made their way back almost to the edge of the timber, and began making preparations for giving the enemy a warm welcome.

"We will give them one musket and four pistol volleys," said Dick, "and then we will make a dash to where our horses are tied, mount, and get away in a hurry."

This plan was thought to be a splendid one, and the youths waited as patiently as possible for the coming of the enemy.

They could see the boats, and kept watch of the move-

ments of the enemy. As soon as the British had made a landing, they headed almost straight toward the spot where the youths were secreted.

"They are coming straight here, Dick," said Bob.

"Yes, I thought they would do so."

"Ah, where is that gang going?" as a party of perhaps one hundred separated from the others and started along the shore.

"They are going to cut off our retreat in that direction," said Dick, with a smile.

"They must think us green indeed, if they imagine that we would stay up there on the promontory and let them surround us," said Bob.

"That's right. But I judge from their actions that that is just what they think we have done."

"We'll soon undeceive them."

Closer and closer came the redcoats. In the main force which was now advancing toward the youths there were perhaps two hundred men. This was odds of only two to one, and the "Liberty Boys" were not disposed to be daunted by such odds as that. Many a time they had thrashed a force four times as large as their own, where they had the advantage of a protected position, as now.

Closer and closer came the redcoats. They did not seem to suspect that they might be in danger, and came on boldly. Likely they thought that the "rebels" would be terrified by the very sight of the king's soldiers.

If such were their thoughts they soon learned their mistake, for when they were still quite a little ways off—but within musket-shot distance—the "Liberty Boys" fired a volley from the muskets.

They had been careful, taken their time, and taken careful aim, and the result was that the volley did terrible execution. At least seventy-five of the redcoats went down, either dead or wounded, and on the air rose wild yells, curses, and mingled with these the groans of the wounded.

For a few moments the redcoats stood, confused, scarcely realizing what had happened, and then their commander yelled for them to charge, and they dashed forward.

The "Liberty Boys" waited till the redcoats were well within pistol-shot distance, and then fired two volleys in quick succession.

These volleys did good execution, also, and again the redcoats were momentarily halted. They thought that this surely had exhausted the shots at the command of the enemy, however, and again their commander cried out for them to charge, and again they dashed forward.

Again they were treated to a surprise, for two more volleys rang out, and almost a score of their men fell. And

then, while they stood there, almost dazed by the blow which had been struck them so unexpectedly, Dick gave the command for the "Liberty Boys" to charge, and they dashed out from among the trees and straight toward the redcoats, with wild yells and cheers that were calculated to do anything rather than reassure the British.

"Down with the King! Long live Liberty!" the youths cried, and the next instant they were among their foes, bayonetting and striking the redcoats down right and left.

It was more than the British soldiers could stand, veterans though they were. They had never encountered such terrible fighters, and they had already received such a shock that their nerves were unstrung; the result was that they turned and fled like scared sheep, many of them throwing their muskets away as they went.

Dick, who was watching things closely, saw that the other portion of the force was coming, and he gave the order to retreat. The youths obeyed instantly, and succeeded in regaining the shelter of the timber before the reinforcements arrived.

More than a hundred of the British had been killed and wounded, and not a "Liberty Boy" had been killed. Six or seven were wounded in the hand-to-hand combat, but not seriously, and feeling highly elated on account of their success, the youths retired to where their horses were tied, and hastily reloaded their weapons. Dick had stationed sentinels, so as to avoid being surprised while engaged in this work, and they got through without being interrupted.

The truth of the matter was that the redcoats, when they had looked over the field and taken note of the damage that had been inflicted by the "rebels," made up their minds that prudence would be the better part of valor, and did not rush after the "Liberty Boys" in reckless fashion. They realized that an enemy that could fight as this one had was not to be approached carelessly.

So they busied themselves with caring for the wounded, who were attended to as well as was possible under the circumstances, and then were carried and placed in the boats, and taken aboard the ships.

Then the dead soldiers were buried, after which the redcoats held a council. They did not know what to do. They had now less than two hundred men, and they judged that the enemy had at least one hundred.

While they were debating the question they were signaled to return to the ships, and of course they had to obey.

The scouts Dick had stationed to watch the enemy came and reported that the redcoats were going back to the ships,

and then the "Liberty Boys" started to hold a council to decide upon their course of action. While thus engaged they heard a loud report, and then a solid shot struck a tree not fifty yards from where they were, and split it in two pieces, scattering branches all around.

"Ah, that is why they recalled the soldiers," said Dick, "so that they could treat us to a shower of cannon-balls without being in any danger of hurting their own men."

Boom! went another cannon, followed quickly by two more reports, and three balls struck in the vicinity.

"We had better get away from here," said Dick. "They seem to have a pretty good idea of our location, and if one of those balls should strike among us it would do considerable damage."

The youths hastened to mount, and then they rode away as rapidly as they could, the boom-boom—boom! of the cannons being heard almost constantly, and the cannon-balls striking all around them.

It was not a pleasant sensation to have to ride along, waiting for the coming of the cannon-balls, and not knowing but at any moment one might strike one, and end his career then and there. This sort of thing, as any old soldier will tell you, is much more straining on the nerves than to be engaged in a battle, where there is such rapid action as to keep one's mind busy on his work, and giving one no time to think of what may happen.

Luckily, however, not one of the cannon-balls struck in the midst of the party of youths, and they presently got entirely out of range.

They drew long breaths of relief when they saw that they were no longer in danger from the cannon-balls.

"Say, that was about as hard a bit of work as we've had to do in a good while," said Bob.

"Yes, it wasn't a pleasant experience, at any rate," agreed Dick.

"I've been out in a good many different storms," grinned Bob, "but that's the first time I was ever out when it was raining cannon-balls."

"The redcoats seem to be pretty careless how they sling the cannon-balls around," said Sam Sanderson.

"Where are you going now, Dick?" asked Bob.

"I think we might as well go over to Mr. Sloan's and camp there. There is a nice place near his house."

"That will be a good idea, and perhaps we may be able to get something to eat there."

The youths were all more or less hungry, for they had not had much to eat since the day before, and they rode onward briskly, all being animated by the hope that they

would be able to get some food when they arrived at the Sloan home.

At last they arrived there, and as they rode out from among the trees they came upon a party of eight men, who were just in the act of entering the front yard of the Sloan home.

Dick and his comrades recognized the men at a glance.

They were Slim Jim Rankin and the members of his band.

That they were bent on mischief was evident, for in their hands they held pistols.

Their faces were toward the house, and their backs were toward the "Liberty Boys," so they did not see the latter.

The ground was soft, and the horses' hoofs did not send forth any noise to speak of, and as the youths had ridden out from the edge of the timber and had not come along the road, the members of the "Slippery Ten" gang did not see them, or suspect that anyone was in the vicinity.

Dick made a signal to the youths, and they drew their pistols. Then he lifted up his voice, and called out:

"Halt! Stand where you are, Slim Jim and your comrades!"

With startled cries the eight men whirled, and when they saw the "Liberty Boys," they gave utterance to loud yells of rage and terror, and started to flee.

Dick's mind had been working rapidly, and he had made up his mind what to do. Slim Jim Rankin and his gang had made so many attempts to do Mr. Sloan injury that the youth was confident they would, if not interfered with, sooner or later kill the settler. As his life was worth more than the lives of all the scoundrels, and as only their death would end their attempts to put the settler out of the way, Dick decided to kill the desperadoes. So now, when they started to flee, he called out, sharply:

"Fire, 'Liberty Boys'! And shoot to kill."

The youths were not averse to doing so, and they took aim and fired a volley. As there were only eight of the scoundrels, and at least one hundred bullets were sent after them, the members all went down, six of them dead, the other two so badly wounded that they would die in a few minutes.

Mr. and Mrs. Sloan and Winnie came running out of the house at the sound of the volley, and when they saw the "Liberty Boys," they were delighted.

And when they saw the dead and dying desperadoes they were horrified; but they were glad, too, for they realized that with the extermination of the band known as the "Slippery Ten" would end a reign of terror in that vicinity, and remove a standing menace against Mr. Sloan's life.

One of the two wounded men was Slim Jim Rankin and he was defiant and vicious to the very last, his last words being bitter curses on the heads of Dick Slater and his "Liberty Boys." This did not worry the youths, however. As Bob remarked:

"Curses from such fellows are like chickens: they come home to roost."

When the two were dead, Mr. Sloan got a spade, and with the "Liberty Boys" made an excavation in the edge of the timber, and carried the dead bodies of the eight desperadoes and interred them.

"There, that ends the depredations of that gang," said Dick; "and I guess it is a good thing for the community at large."

"Yes, indeed," said Mr. Sloan. "Those fellows were not liked even by the loyalists, for they could not be trusted, and often robbed their friends as well as their enemies."

"I thought I heard firing over toward the seashore an hour or so ago, Mr. Slater," said Winnie Sloan. "Do you know what was going on?"

"Yes, Miss Winnie; we had an encounter with a party of British."

"How did you make out?" asked Mr. Sloan eagerly.

"Very well, indeed," said Dick. "We killed and wounded nearly a hundred of the redcoats, and did not lose a single one of our men."

"That was wonderful," exclaimed Winnie.

"We were protected by the trees, while they were out in the open."

"By the way, Mr. Slater, what about Savannah?" asked Mr. Sloan. "Has it really fallen into the hands of the British?"

"Yes. The British are in control there, now, and you will be plundered by bands of foraging redcoats, no doubt."

"Quite likely."

"And such being the case, perhaps you will not object to giving us something to eat, and some feed for our horses," the youth said, smilingly.

"I shall be only too glad to do so, Mr. Slater, and would have been so under any circumstances. You see, we owe you a debt of gratitude for what you have done for me—so great a debt that we will be unable ever to pay it, I am sure."

"You owe me nothing, sir, and I am always glad to aid anyone in distress, and especially am I glad to be able to render aid to a patriot. You are more than welcome to all that I have done."

Mr. Sloan led the way to the stable, and helped the youths feed the horses, while Mrs. Sloan and Winnie en-

entered the house and busied themselves preparing a meal for the "Liberty Boys."

The youths were hungry, and did the repast full justice, much to the satisfaction of the woman and girl, who were complimented by the evident appreciation of their cooking.

After they had finished the meal the youths again bridled and saddled their horses, and got ready to take their departure.

"How long do you expect to remain in these parts, Mr. Slater?" asked Mr. Sloan.

"I hardly know," was the reply. "We may remain a week or two, and then again we may decide to leave at any time. Circumstances will have much to do with shaping our future course of action."

"Well, we shall always be glad to have you come and see us, and procure food of us," said the settler, heartily; "that is, he added, "so long as the redcoats leave us any food or provisions."

"Thank you," said Dick. "We will at least try to see you again before leaving these parts."

"I hope you will do so, Mr. Slater."

The youths then rode away, and put in the rest of the

day scouring the country in search of small foraging bands of redcoats.

They remained in the vicinity a week longer, and had several lively encounters with the British; then, finding that they could not accomplish much more, they took their departure, turning their faces in a direction where they hoped to find plenty of work to do.

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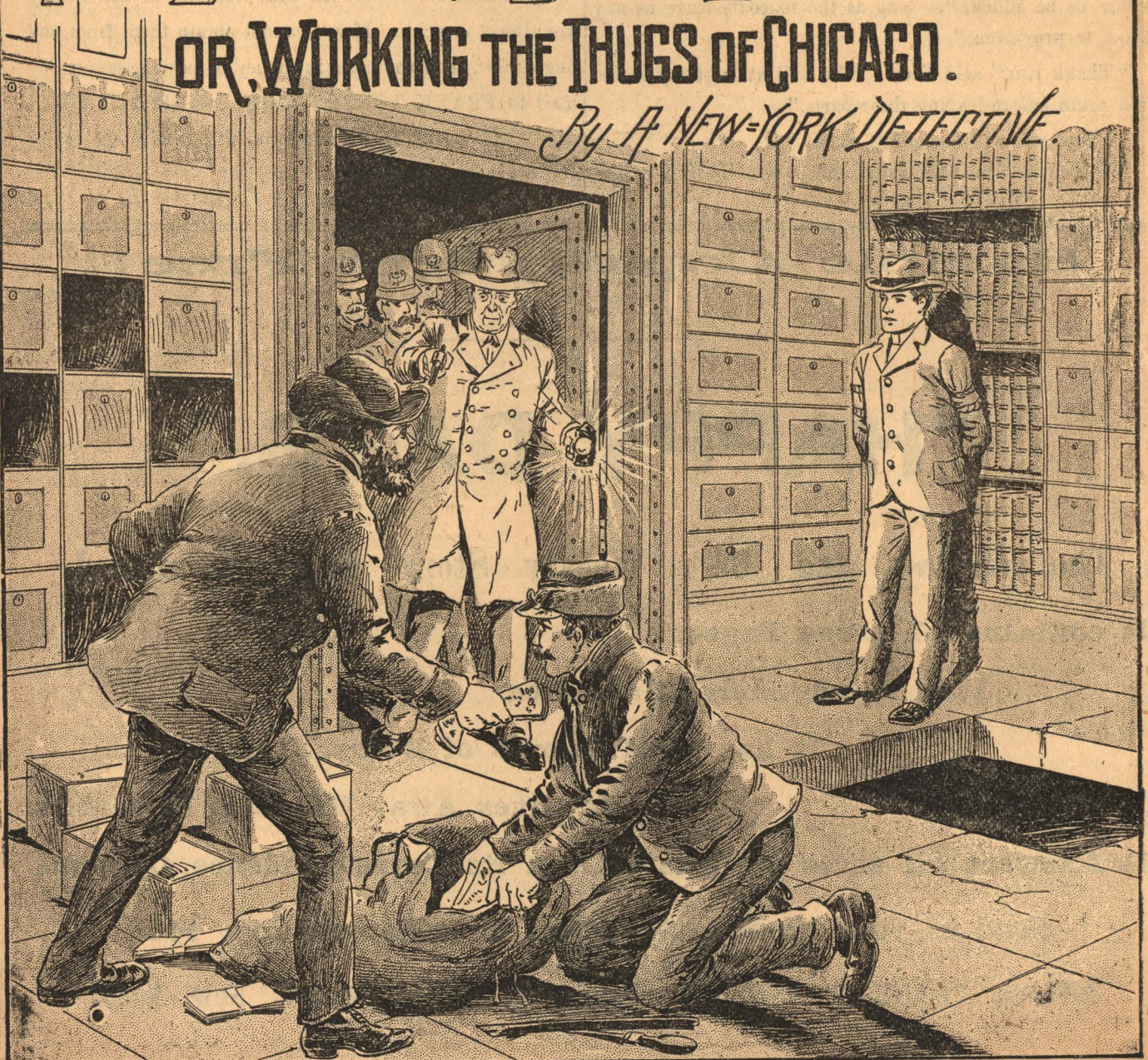
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